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THE HOUSE OF LYS

ONE BOOK OF ITS HISTORY

A TALE

BY

MAJOR-GENERAL W. G. HAMLEY

LATE OF THE ROYAL ENGINEERS

AUTHOR OF 'GUILTY, OR NOT GUILTY?'

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS

EDINBURGH AND LONDON

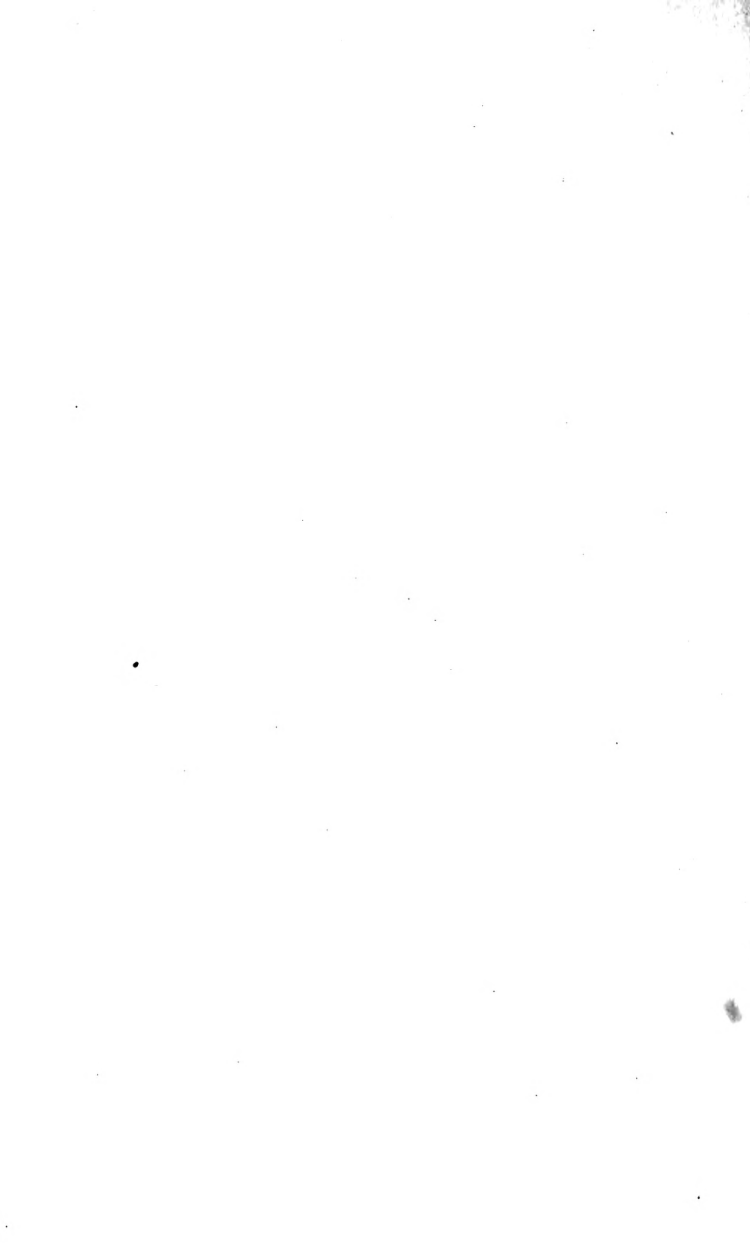
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THE HOUSE OF LYS.

CHAPTER X.

UNDER A CLOUD—FOREIGN TRAVEL.

AFTER these things the summer of 1855 advanced to its height. The weather was bright and warm. The war was now the subject uppermost in men's thoughts. It was pretty clear by this time that England and France were going to succeed; but the cost at which the success was to be gained was greatly exercising our people. A strong belief in maladministration was abroad. Inattention to the requirements of the troops was charged against the authorities at home, and it was loudly complained that the favouritism of men and of corps, which raises so much odium in time of peace, was being persisted in even in front of the enemy. Somehow or other the country had got

quite into a humour for hanging somebody. Indignation was in a chaotic state, and had not yet begun to gravitate towards a particular department or individual; but it could be foreseen that it would take some definite direction after a while, and would demand victims. Anybody might be made a victim, and there was therefore a *sauf-qui-peut* feeling current among officials. Selfishness, ill-nature, and fear were in the ascendant. Old ties and tendencies were put by for the moment. The problem was how, by any sacrifice, to escape the wrath to come.

No time could be more unfortunate for the arrival at home of a culprit who had been neglecting his duties and trying to carry things with a high hand, than this summer was. The very persons who would, on ordinary occasions, have been the abettors and apologists of such a culprit, were transformed by terror and the goading of public opinion into pseudo-purists. They were cursing by their gods the silly disciples of their own school who were unable to discern the signs of the times, who would pursue their old iniquities even in reach of the beadle's uplifted cane, and who thought it spirited and manly to brave the dangerous spirit that was abroad. "Here's that Well-born again, curse him! how can he be such an infernal ass! We can't help him, that's certain; and what's more, we're not going to endanger our own backs by attempting to

screen him. Our only safe *rôle* is to be as indignant as the public, and throw the first stone at him, which may, if heartily done, gain us the credit of being patriotic. He and his friends may hereafter make us feel their vengeance, no doubt; but these are days when it is necessary to distinguish between the greater and the less. So here goes, *coûte que coûte*. He has only his own folly to thank."

When Lt.-Colonel du Lys went to state his grievance at the Horse Guards, and to ask for the generous sympathy of the Staff at home in his unmerited affliction, he was astonished to find only black looks and short observations. Nothing like a hearty reception from official acquaintances; no responsive curse for the newspapers, or brotherly moan over the prevalence of democracy. Only the very stiffest announcement that his behaviour had caused great embarrassment, that it was under consideration, and that it would be disposed of by authorities much above their level. It was a deuce of a disappointment. The military friends to whom he would naturally have applied for help and advice were abroad with the army. He addressed himself to one or two influential civil acquaintances, who made inquiries, but were mysteriously told that the case of Colonel du Lys was looked upon as very serious, and the best thing he and his friends could do was to keep quiet for the present. He found that he

was a very prominent figure in leading articles ; that the one correspondent who had taken the plebeian view of his behaviour had been heeded twenty times as much as all the untainted ones put together ; and that there was a very threatening clamour for a dealing out of impartial justice to him, which he interpreted into a cry for immediately sacrificing him on the altar of democracy.

He had been in England a fortnight or thereabout. His efforts at excusing himself had been so steadily resisted, that for three or four days past he had discontinued them, mightily indignant—indeed in that mood which has been known to take a hero to the shore of the much-resounding sea. His mind should no more be agitated, so he said, by looking to those for whom he had ceased to feel respect, and who were manifestly bent on sending everything to the devil—craven creatures who had allowed themselves to be frightened by the phantom of the *demos*. They might do what they would now—he didn't care ; if they thought he was going to the office again to give them a chance of putting matters right, they were hugely mistaken ; he would see every one of them, great and small, inconveniently situated first. He was in one of his clubs, where he had dined in a very bad humour, and complained of the dishes and the wine. Sallying from the coffee-room hot and irritated, he flung himself into a

chair in the reading-room and was beginning to use his toothpick savagely, when a servant passed bearing copies of the 'London Gazette' of that evening. "Let me look at that," he called; and the man handed him the paper. He would see if the name of any whom he had left at the front was mentioned therein. Established habit took his eye first to the place of his own regiment. Then he instantly caught sight of his own name. What was it? Why, Lieutenant and Captain Milacre to be Captain and Lieutenant-Colonel *vice* du Lys, who had been placed on half-pay.

It was not in the du Lys nature to rant and rave. He behaved with much self-possession; he even ran his eye over the other announcements, recognitions of the services of several men of whom he knew something, and deaths in action and wounds of several more. "Why the devil didn't I die in action," was his mental exclamation, as with a perfectly steady hand and countenance he threw down the 'Gazette' and walked into the street to escape before any blunderer could offer him sympathy.

Next morning one or two papers which could appreciate this award expressed themselves as satisfied, and said they were glad to see the authorities waking up to a sense of justice and of public sentiment. But the great majority were bitterly severe on what they described as an ingenious device for screening a notorious

offender by the infliction of a nominal punishment. They did not say, and probably they did not know, what more appropriate sentence could have been delivered; but it may be they had had visions of hanging and quartering, or at the least of dismissal with ignominy from the service. Whatever they may have thought, it was a heavy blow to him at whom it was directed. His promotion and his chance of farther distinguishing himself summarily concluded. His name removed from the list of the regiment of which he had been so proud. His condemnation to inactivity at a time when every man of spirit was fighting his country's battles. Who shall say how these things bruised the young man's heart?

Just at this time du Lys received a communication which, even in the depth of his grief and anger, brought a glow to his breast. It was a letter from Treworden, which had been to the Crimea and been returned to London. The poor fellow had found in his friends all the kindness and sympathy that it was possible for them to show. For his sake they suppressed all manifestation of their sore disappointment at what had befallen him, and he enjoyed now all the comfort that he could receive. Charlotte Climo had behaved like a regular trump, as he said. Immediately on his return he gave her back her promise—this being, as he thought, a matter of course in the circumstances. But Char-

lotte had behaved heroically on the occasion. She resented the thought that what had happened could make any change in her—except, as she said, that she would cherish him the more anxiously, now that he could do little for himself. His strength was coming back ; but he was still too weak, and too little inured to his shattered condition, to be able to form plans for the future.

He had sent forward from Plymouth the box with which du Lys had intrusted him, and had no doubt that it had gone safely to its destination.

To read and to answer this letter was a means of turning his mind, for a time, from his own trouble.

Since du Lys returned to England, he had not visited his brother—though, of course, he had informed him of his return. Before his fate had been decided at the Horse Guards he found that his brother, with all his house, was about to proceed to Germany, in hope to benefit his son, who had for some time been out of health. Du Lys, miserable just then in England, and feeling heart-sick at everything connected with the service, thought he would go abroad too ; there was nothing to prevent him. And thus he first met his relations at Dover, and they all crossed in company. Had Sir Geoffrey du Lys remained at home, of course Colonel du Lys would now have gone to visit his brother, would have heard of Thyrsa Knowles's good

fortune, and would certainly have renewed acquaintance with Thyrza: then it would speedily have been seen what the future relation between them was to be. But this foreign expedition of the du Lys family completely balked the reunion of these two young people, and the little romance that might possibly have sprung out of it. Colonel du Lys went abroad in the belief that Thyrza was still a peasant girl—or wife. In the belief; for undoubtedly, amid all his trouble, he had often given a thought to Thyrza, and had looked to seeing her after the plaguy business at the Horse Guards should be over. He did not expect it to end as it did; and, when it did end, he felt too humiliated to think of presenting himself as a gallant even before Thyrza Knowles. He thought all the world was pointing at him. He would rather be somewhere where he was quite unknown.

His party went first to Frankfort, from whence a German physician of eminence ordered them to Nauheim, that his delicate nephew might take the salt-baths there. It was a place where very few English were to be seen, but where, nevertheless, a large company assembled towards the end of autumn. In those days gambling went on there at a furious rate, and formed really the staple amusement of the visitors. Most of them seemed to be always promenading in front of the great building, refreshing at the restaur-

ant, or playing at the tables. Sir Geoffrey and Lady Helen du Lys dined always at their hotel, and amused themselves with making excursions about the country, going only now and then to witness the gay promenade and hear the band. But this mode of life soon grew intolerable to the young soldier, who nevertheless was at a loss what to substitute for it. He did not care for making acquaintances or flirting. He was *ennuyé* to a degree. Life seemed to have become quite a blank. Man delighted him not, nor woman either. In this mood he wandered one day from mere vacancy into one of the saloons, and thought he would wile away half an hour in play. He did so, and won nearly two hundred gulden. The winnings were a trifle, but the excitement of the play gave him a relief of mind such as he had not known for several weeks. He had played but a short time on the first occasion; the next he played longer. He went again. His gain or loss had been so far of little consequence, but the game won him from himself. He was less unhappy in the saloon than anywhere, and consequently in the saloon he soon spent the greater part of his time. He knew very well what he was doing. It was on reflection, and not from want of reflection, that he began to lead such a life. Why not? What the devil was there to be steady about? Everything was going to the devil; and even if that were not

so, it was all over with *him*. The change in his life and ideas now was as great as it had been when he first left idling at home, to take up the active duties of a soldier. But what a lamentable change this was ! It is to be presumed that, under the circumstances, it was inevitable. Fortunately, there was still a question whether there might not be in him enough of good sense and good disposition to triumph over the recklessness which silly ideas and wilful conduct had produced.

The baths did not benefit the young du Lys as had been hoped. He was weaker after his course ; but the German doctor confidently affirmed that in a week or two he would be conscious of great improvement. As this, however, had to be waited for, it was thought prudent to take the patient to the south of Europe. There is a station called Meran in the Austrian Tyrol, which had acquired a considerable reputation as having a climate peculiarly favourable to delicate chests. It was but little known to the English ; but it happened that a friend of Lady Helen du Lys had been there, and strongly recommended the place. Thither it was decided to proceed, so as to prolong the summer as much as possible. If Meran should disappoint them, it was, at any rate, on the road to Italy, where the party could take up quarters for the winter.

Colonel du Lys was in two minds. He wished to accompany his relatives ; but he was unwilling to

tear himself from the gaming-tables, which had become to him quite an anodyne. He had lost money, but what of that? Money could never do him a good so great as to make him now somewhat insensible to the load of care, which, left to its full operation, would have been wellnigh insupportable. He reflected, however, that the season was nearly past at Nauheim, and that there were gambling-places in plenty farther south, where winter did not interrupt the play. He therefore decided to keep with his relatives for the present. Their next halting-place was Munich; and here, when he got occasionally an interval for reflection, he began to count up and to consider his losses, which were really serious. The feeling that he had been imprudent in this respect, added to his former chagrin, made him restless and feverish. He found that his energies were diminished, and that he was unable to find in the sights of Munich that amusement which they always furnish to a healthy mind. His brother and sister-in-law, on the contrary, found much entertainment, and were in no hurry to depart, until one day when a French acquaintance whom they met there remarked, with reference to du Lys's complaint of lassitude and loss of appetite, that many English people fell sick at Munich, and that doubtless he would be better after he had changed the air.

Hereupon the colonel said that he would proceed in advance of his party, and wait for them at some one of the stations on their route. They most kindly offered to leave at once with him; but this he entreated them not to do, saying that it would greatly add to his ailing if he felt that he interfered with their plans or their enjoyment, and that he was not such an invalid but that he could see to his own wants, and be all the better for the little occupation which he would have by being his own courier. This arranged, he set off without delay and made for Innsbruck, feeling assured that once he was away from Munich and getting on to higher ground he would begin to shake off his indisposition. But he had reason to be disappointed as to this. There was no return of animation and vigour as the journey proceeded, and at Innsbruck he found himself so seriously disordered that he certainly would have put himself in the hands of a physician had there been at hand one of whom he had any knowledge. But he revolted against a foreign practitioner and a stranger; and, still persuading himself that health might be recovered at a still higher level, he with much effort set out to cross the Brenner Pass, and make his way to Meran.

If anything could rouse a man's flagging energies, it would be crossing the Alps at the beginning of October in fine weather, such as he was favoured with.

There was very little snow about as yet, and the cold of the journey was not greater than a moderate thickness of wraps would compensate. The tall, dark pines; the precipices; the chasms; the smiling, golden valleys, down so far beneath that men there looked no bigger than puppets, and horses like sheep; the little mountain *châlets*; the chapels stuck about in prominent places; the farm-houses, each adorned with its quaint image or picture of the Virgin,—were sights full of interest. And, as the tortuous road made its way among these, twisting so suddenly as to wholly change the scenes as if by magic, even our sick traveller was forced to forget himself. The crisp fresh air did indeed give him some support, and the noise of torrents roaring hundreds of yards below the light bridges over which he drove, and the impact of the sunbeams on the snowy peaks which were ever coming into view, would have attracted attention from his senses. There were parts of the road, too, so steep, that any man who could walk at all must prefer to go up them on foot; and so the traveller had now and then to exert himself much. Yet he was longing for repose, notwithstanding that he could compel himself to exertion; and when he began to descend the mountains again, and when the soft breath of Italy rather suddenly encountered him, his languor returned, and went on increasing as he descended. At Botzen (or Bolzano, as the Italians call

it), where he slept, he was as ill at ease as he had been at Innsbruck; but he was now within a moderate journey of Meran, of which he had heard such wonderful things in the way of cures; and, contending still with the infirmity of his flesh, he braved this last moderate journey. But he had no longer the spirit to enjoy the scenery. The rich gardens and vineyards through which he took his way from Botzen; the smiling hills with blue crests always looking down upon him; the dusty path, which might have reminded him that he had left autumn behind in Transalpine regions, and was again amid the summer,—were nearly unheeded. Even the rustic church, about half-way, the tower of which has lost its balance like that at Pisa, did not attract his notice, although his postilion insisted upon halting to drink at the *gasthaus* adjoining. He lay back in his carriage, sorely weary, and indifferent to all that he was passing. On arrival at his hotel he was lifted from his carriage. He desired to be taken straight to his chamber, where his servant with some trouble got him to bed.

Was there in Meran an English medical man, either resident or a visitor? was immediately the question. No, there was no English practitioner; but there was a German doctor who had been in England, and who spoke English fluently. This doctor was soon at du Lys's bedside. He proved to be a man of middle age,

very kind and attentive. A little observation satisfied him that his patient was suffering from fever, not at present violent, but of a kind likely to be distressing and tedious. He, too, expressed the opinion that it was the effect of some inhospitable influence which the air of Munich exercises often upon strangers; and he saw that the enforcement of a rigid treatment was necessary to prevent the noxious malady from fastening on him, and perhaps permanently undermining his constitution. The doctor did not consider his life to be in any danger; and so du Lys would not allow his brother to be alarmed or hurried in his journey by the announcement of his illness. His condition, therefore, was rather a desolate one. There was one waiter in his hotel who spoke tolerably good English; and through this man he got his wants attended to pretty well. The landlord also could speak English a little.

After a few days the doctor thought it advisable that he should leave his chamber; but he imposed severe restrictions, and would allow the invalid to be taken into the sunshine only during the warmest part of the day. Fortunately, reading in moderation was not prohibited, and there was a library in the place which contained German reprints of many English works. Partly in reading these, and partly in trying to brighten up his German by attempting some native books, he contrived to pass the time. Among his

studies in English was a narrative, by a lady, of her residence in Bengal. It was written in a lively, pleasant style; its descriptions were graphic, and the adventures were very entertaining. The writer had been deeply interested by the customs of the natives, and particularly of the servants. Du Lys had probably heard some of his acquaintances speak of the kind of people by whom one is served in India; but he had never taken much heed of the subject. So that now it came to him with a peculiar freshness; and from the clever manner in which it was dealt with, amused him vastly. Only to think that each servant will perform but one office, whether his time may be fully occupied by it or not!—that the man who brushes your clothes will not wait on you at table, and that he who grooms your horse will not polish a boot! He did not think there was the least chance of his ever going to India, so that to him the matter was one of mere speculation. But how on earth, with such an unaccommodating lot, the country was saved from becoming utterly stagnant, he could not conceive. How would it have fared with the American States, or with any of the lands which we have colonised, if Englishmen had had a similar objection to making themselves generally useful?

While the weather still remained warm, he got leave to walk about a very little. But a very little walking sufficed for seeing Meran in a very moderate time.

Just where a rapid but not very broad or deep stream, having cut its way through some high mountains, begins to tumble along a comparatively plain area, the little town is seated on the banks, or rather on the right bank—for the district on the left bank can hardly be said to form part of the town. It is a very unpretending place, where only two or three church-towers are conspicuous objects; but these make up for what they want in appearance by maintaining an incessant clang of bells. The noise of these is stunning, and calculated, one might suppose, to be very disagreeable to delicate invalids. There is, however, very little complaint of them. Of late years some handsome public buildings for concert-rooms, reading-rooms, restaurants, and so on, have been erected on the town side of the stream, and over against these, a very extensive modern hotel; but these did not exist at the time of du Lys's visit. The banks of the river were laid out with some taste as gardens, and there were three bridges, that highest up the stream being in itself a picturesque object, and affording as a standpoint charming views up and down the valley.

The dress of the peasantry of both sexes is of the general Tyrolean pattern, but the men are given to red waistcoats and white stockings to an extent not to be remarked in the other parts of the Tyrol. The town itself, as du Lys thought, wanted the sanitary inspector

very badly, and did not give the idea of a wholesome place at all ; but somehow there was no alarm.

Thus, from the description of it that has been attempted, Meran might be put down for a very commonplace mountain-town without any distinctive feature. And yet it has, in the autumn months, a distinction which is not a feature. Go where one may about Meran, along the streets, on the promenades, over the bridges, to the churches, to the shops, along the banks of the stream, one will see the ground or floors black with the skins of the purple grapes : and the reason of this is not far to seek ; for out of every ten visitors whom one meets, nine will certainly be engaged in eating purple grapes, of which they will carry supplies in little baskets slung to the arm or over the shoulder.

These grapes are in Meran what a Red Indian calls "great medicine." They are believed to have some salutary principle before which disease must flee away, as the snakes and toads did before St Patrick. It is more distinctly upon chest diseases that they make war, and in that field the triumphs claimed for them are astounding ; but they may be pitted against other complaints with as certain, if with less brilliant, results. As it is with many of the great boons which have been provided for disordered humanity in England, so with the grapes in Meran—when a patient

does not mend after taking them, it is because he has not taken enough of them. Hence, naturally, visitors who have come long distances, simply for the sake of being cured, are disinclined to have their expedition fail simply on a point of quantity. Abstinence is unknown, moderation so rare that it may be left altogether out of the account, and the only question is concerning the degree of excess—whether the fruit is absorbed forty or sixty or a hundred fold the rational consumption. There is no doubt whatever that many patients consume daily from six to eight pounds each, and it is quite a general belief that many eat eighteen or twenty pounds a-day each; but as no authenticated instance of this can be adduced, it is better to give the statement in a qualified manner. Certain it is that both sick and sound take as much as they can of the pleasant remedy, and that the cost of it is not calculated to prevent indulgence. The price is about tenpence (English) for four pounds of fruit; and this is complained of in the district as double the normal price, and as due to the immense demand caused by visitors!

Of course du Lys was told that he might eat purple grapes (very nice green grapes are to be had, but they seem to possess no virtue, and are as little accounted of as was silver in the days of Solomon). So he used to take his seat in warm nooks and eat his grapes, at

first with many precautions against letting the world see what he had been doing—that is, he got some nice little cases made of paper, wherein he stealthily deposited his skins, and which he took opportunities of privately committing to the stream, or of dropping into some one of the many ditches which contribute to render the air of Meran so healing. But somehow he found his fastidiousness ooze away, like the valour of Acres, or like the shyness of that young stag commemorated by Gay:—

“ At first within the yard confined,
He flies and hides from all mankind.
Now, bolder grown, with fixed amaze
And distant awe, presumes to gaze.
Nearer and nearer now he stands,
To feel the praise of patting hands ;
Examines every fist for bread,
Follows the servants to be fed,
Munches the linen on the lines,
And on a hood or apron dines.”

Indeed it must be admitted that Colonel du Lys, after a few useless struggles, conformed himself to the custom of Meran, getting rid of a measure of delicacy with every dozen pounds of grapes, and at last making his circle round him as unscrupulously as Major Chawder did, without the intervention of grapes, in Eden.

The grapes, or the air of Meran, or the doctor's skill, or the natural strength of du Lys's constitution, or all these things united, after a time brought the young

man round to a somewhat healthier condition ; but he was still weak and depressed, and the doctor gave him no hope of being speedily restored to his former vigour. That Munich disease, he said, hung unmercifully about its victim, and could be eradicated only by care continued for many months.

The shock of finding their brother so ill was great to Sir Geoffrey and Lady Helen du Lys when they overtook him at Meran. They had had no suspicion of his condition, and they found him wasted and enfeebled. Neither was this their only sorrow at the time. Their son had not benefited by travelling ; the summer was nearly over, and they were distressed by sad apprehensions. The reunion, therefore, did not bring very great joy to any of the party ; but the greatest satisfaction came to du Lys, who had now about him friends who would care for and cherish him. He hoped, too, that the parents' anxiety led them to think worse of the boy's case than was warranted. The lad was to eat grapes, as everybody did ; he was to breathe the healing air of Meran ; and the whole party was to take heart again from the accounts given of themselves by many residents of the place, who declared that they came first thither as invalids in quest of health, that they had regained health there, and that they would not risk a relapse into sickness by returning to their homes. At their very arrival

the new-comers were cheered by the warmth and the enduring summer of the little snugery amid the hills.

But while they were able to make summer within their enchanted circle, the peaks and ridges all round them were putting on their hoary head-dresses, as an intimation that winter had not wholly forgotten that region—that he was only a little dilatory in resorting thither. The landlord of their hotel assured them in his imperfect English that they might for the present be quite easy about the temperature, and that there were certain infallible signs denoting the break-up of the summer which would give ample warning to those who proposed to flee before the cold. Every day at the *table-d'hôte* dinner, which the party from choice attended, there was a little comforting speech made to milady about the continuance of the soft air and the absence of unfavourable prognostics.

“No cloud yet, milady; and the wind he still the west,” he said one day, as he took the dish of fish from the waiter, and presented it with his own hands. “No, indeed,” answered her ladyship. “It is still extremely pleasant.”

“Ah yes. The sun shine—the window all is open—you see the flowers how sweet! Oh, it is fine!”

“I’m o’erjoyed to hear anything that soonds like English in this ootlandish place,” interjected a voice

from near the other end of the table. "Would ye be good enough" (to the landlord) "to step this way presently, as I'm greatly troubled to understand about the posts?"

"I, too, am glad to hear an English voice," said Colonel du Lys. "I have been some little time here now, and I shall be happy after dinner to impart to you what I have been able to learn about the place."

"Ye're kind, sir, I'm sure; and I'll be greatly obleeged to ye," replied the stranger, who was an elderly man with a large frame, and a countenance which still told of an intimate acquaintance with the weather, although it was evidently wasted by illness. "Will ye alloo me the pleasure of drinking your health? These Austrian wines are better than I had any idea of."

"I think them very good," answered du Lys, as he bowed. "And this house is very well supplied." There was something about this stranger that seemed not entirely strange, and yet du Lys could not call to mind that he had met him before. He thought over the company at Nauheim, at Munich, but could not make the face a bit clearer. Perhaps it was somebody whom he had seen about a London club. The doubt was not allowed to perplex him very long.

Du Lys retired after dinner, according to the doctor's order, to gain a little period of perfect rest, that he

might be equal to gentle exercise in the evening. He was in his arm-chair, with an English newspaper, which had been just glanced over, resting on his knee, his mind running off to melancholy thoughts, when the English-speaking waiter made his appearance, and announced somebody with an unintelligible name.

“What name do you say?” asked du Lys, awaking from his gloomy reverie.

Again a heap of gutturals and hisses, but no information. A third attempt of the waiter’s had no better success.

“Hoot, toot!” exclaimed the visitor, entering, “ye’ll never get any sense out o’ that illeeterate body, and so I’ll just be my own introjuicer. I was delighted just that ye spoke pleasantly to me at the table—indeed I’m sure it was not in your nature to do otherwise—and I’ve lost no time in renewing the acquaintance, everything disagreeable being buried and forgotten.”

It is difficult to describe what passed through du Lys’s mind while listening to this address. He had risen from his chair, and was steadying himself on the arm of it. His illness had taken from him much of the self-possession which had once distinguished him. The perplexity of his mind was apparent in his countenance. He had taken the hand that was offered him, and it seemed that all that was occurring was perfectly right and natural, only he couldn’t col-

lect his thoughts. "Won't you take a seat?" at last he said.

"I thank ye," said the new-comer. "But I mis-doubt that ye're not altogether clear about my identity. I'm no ghaist, though I quite thought I might have been one by this. And they tell me that you, like myself, have been greatly debeelitated. I hope your strength's coming back brawly."

"Of course I ought to be able to call you by your name," answered du Lys. "I am quite sure we have met before, and——"

"Met before! Ay, it isn't so long ago; and the circumstances weren't such as pass out of a man's mind like idle adventures. I'm thinking our last conversation took place somewhere near Balaklava."

The name seemed dug up out of the far past, so completely had du Lys's mind been absorbed by personal matters; but it brought a rush of recollection with it. In a moment the scene was before him of the parties scrambling for their stores, of his smoking *tête-à-tête* with Henniker in the hut, and of the war-worn figure with the beard dripping stirabout.

"Good heavens! Colonel Mackechnie!"

"At your service, Colonel du Lys."

"My dear sir," said du Lys, raising himself on the arms of his chair, "how could I——"

But Mackechnie had understood him, and he has-

tened to prevent him when he would have risen. They struck hands again, this time right heartily. Du Lys was so weak that he lay back in his chair, unable to utter more than monosyllables. The tears rose to his eyes.

“Deil take me, but I thought ye knew me at the table, yon, or I’d have been a little more puncteelious, ye ken. But, however——”

Du Lys made a deprecatory sign,—“Pardon me,” he said, when he could command his voice. “I believe that weakness and care have turned my brain. But your presence here was so unexpected; and you, too, look as you did not look of old. You have had your misfortunes?”

“Ay have I,” replied Mackechnie—“a misfortune that I thought was just a climax of earthly ills. I’ve had a contusion that was pretty near a confusion, I can tell ye. In the attack on the Redan I got some mysterious blow on my chest, and was left for dead. But, fortunately, when the day broke, somebody riding over the ground could see no wound upon me, and thought it possible the life might be there; and just that way I escaped being buried alive. The sufferings with which I recovered consciousness are not to be described; but no matter for that. The fact was, that I was utterly disabled, of no use in the field; and the doctors apprehended that some serious

injury had been done to the chest which might result in a lingering disease if the strictest care were not observed. So I was shipped for home, but I suffered so on board ship that I prayed to be put on shore at Malta, where I remained till the symptoms began to abate. Then I wanted to be away from military sounds and bustle for a while; and a doctor body—a kind fellow he was—urged me to go to Meran, where a bruised chest would have a better chance than anywhere. And so I took ship for Venice, and from that made my way cautiously into the hills. The night before last I arrived. Yesterday I was hardly in trim to show at the public table, but to-day I felt rested, and went to dinner, as ye know.”

The only passage which there had ever been between Mackechnie and du Lys was such a one as does not often engender kindness. As long as they remained in the field it roused much wrath in du Lys, and in Mackechnie a profound contempt. Any indignation which the latter may have had to dispose of, he vented upon the unwise practices that prevailed rather than on any individual. But as the hearts of both men were pretty honest, although warped on the one hand by prejudice, and on the other by a sense of injustice, they met as brethren, now that both were far away from causes of provocation, and both were afflicted. A truer soldier than old Mackechnie never existed,

and he was sure to win the good opinion of any comrade who would judge him fairly. And du Lys, it must be remembered, had little opportunity now, and little inclination, for fashionable affectation or assertion of superiority. Moreover, du Lys thought himself aggrieved by his order, which ought, he conceived, to have upheld him at all hazards; and he had had many communings with himself as to the ways of the world, which had in some degree opened his mind, and shown him that the creed in which he had grown up was one which all the world might not be inclined to accept. He began dimly to perceive that he had been much favoured in his profession, and that the favour which he had received was but in small degree due to his merit. It even occurred to him to take some survey of the probable feelings and ideas of those persons who were without the charmed circle in which he was born. Persons so situated might, he thought, hold the peculiar and perverse views which they were known to hold, sincerely and honestly. They were not of necessity criminals, and enemies of the State, whose natural depravity impelled them to subvert the established order of things. It was true that they were often savage and unjust, and that they liked to take a short way to any object of their desire, little regardless of the wrong which they might do by pressing tumultuously along that road. But had they not on their

side to bear what seemed to them grievances? and might they not think themselves justified in entertaining an unfavourable opinion of the aristocratic confederation, just as he and his fellows thought badly of them? Du Lys found that he had exclusively looked at and observed the dark side of the (to him) gentile world; it was only a return of injustice if the gentiles looked more at his faults than his merits. He felt keenly the illiberal behaviour of the other side; but was not a behaviour almost as illiberal reciprocated from his own?

Du Lys speedily made Mackechnie known to his relatives, and a very entertaining companion the old soldier was found to be. He had been nearly everywhere where the flag of Great Britain had floated in his time, had served in hot countries and cold countries, had seen little wars and big wars, and had suffered shipwreck. Through his varied life he had not been unobservant; so there was much originality in his remarks. His new friends only regretted that he was compelled by the condition of his chest to be chary of speech.

The Crimean war was now virtually over. Mackechnie did not expect, if he got better, to go back to Turkish regions; and as to other possible stations, he did not fret himself. So he gave himself up very patiently to the tending of his hurt. He did not believe in the grape-cure, and would not learn to

blacken the ground with skins: but he had with him the cherished pipe which had been his solace before Sebastopol, and he did believe in tobacco; so the two military men blew often a cloud together, and enjoyed the exchange of ideas. An exchange it certainly was, for the two had little in common when their acquaintance began.

"Have you been taking a nap?" asked du Lys one afternoon, when Mackechnie was rather late in presenting himself in the gardens; "I have disposed of two pounds of grapes since the time when I thought you would have made an appearance."

"No, no," Mackechnie answered, "I take no nap in the day-time when I get my night's rest. Ten hours in bed I find enough, and more than enough, for a man on furlough. No, I was just putting a stitch in my boot where I detected a rent—very demeenutive, it is true, but likely to have got worse with another wearing. I couldn't put it off till night, because my eyes are not over-good by lamp-light, and so I thought I would just be done with it at once."

Du Lys looked at the old visage, to ascertain whether this was a grim joke at which he was expected to laugh; but seeing no twinkle under the bushy brows, he said, "Ah, business first, of course," and then waited to be sure of his friend's humour before committing himself farther.

“These Gairman loons,” went on Mackechnie, “are about the worst hands at brogues in the ceevelised world. I know them well of old. Things of their making are in shreds in three weeks; and at their prime they let in coarse gravel, to say nothing of water.”

“Do you mean that you’ve been actually cobbling your boots?”

“Ay do I, and every one that cannot carry about his own craftsman with him would do well to do the same in this land.”

“How many, do you suppose, are clever enough to help themselves to that extent?”

“That I can’t say; but the feet are too intimately concairned in a man’s wellbeing to leave them at any bungler’s mercy. I think, if I couldn’t master both accomplishments, I would learn shoemaking in preference to distilling.”

“And you really can make shoes?”

“Well, as far as knowledge is concerned, I believe I can. But my practice has lain rather in patching and mending, and there I think I could put any of these Gairman bodies to shame.”

“I suppose you went late into the army if you learnt shoemaking first?”

“Hoot, no. I wasn’t seventeen when I was gazetted an ensign. But I canna remember the day when I

couldn't put a wee stitch in a shoe, and I'm sure I was fameeliar with the whole science while but a young laddie."

All this was so new and strange to du Lys that he scarcely knew what to say. To show that he was attending he put in an interjection.

"Ye see," pursued Mackechnie, after expelling a wonderful cloud which sailed away long visible in the clear ether of Meran, and convinced him that the central heat in his pipe was a hidden fact, "Ye see that far among the hills where my early days were spent there's not what ye may call a plethora of mechanics and airtisans, and we couldn't be sending long journeys to the towns every time we required a small service. So we learn to help ourselves in many parteeulars. Notably with our shoon we thought it well to be aye handy ; because, when we were off in chase of birds or beasts and far from home, the failure of a brogue, if it couldn't be mended, would have just compelled one to abandon the expedeeion. I was always careful to carry an awl and a thread to guard against accidents then ; and many a time since, I've found reason to rejoice that I had made like provision."

"Why, you've always got shoemakers in a regiment ; you needn't mend your own shoes there."

"In ordinary circumstances, no. But, as ye know, sickness or death may deprive us of them on sairvice ;

and there are occasions when the men's shoon suffer extraordinarily, and a' the warld's wanting the souter. At such times I have often found my wee talent partecularly to the purpose."

"I daresay: and there are times when it would be much to the purpose to mend your own coat, or to shoe your own horse, or to clean your own watch; but you can't do everything."

"*Non omnia possumus omnes*," said Mackecknie, with a pronunciation and accent that would not then have been approved at Oxford. "There's no man more willing than myself to alloo that a Jack-of-all-trades is master o' none. I should be sorry indeed to set up for a univairisal craftsman. But ye'll remember that I went no farther than saying that I could tap my own shoes, to which I might add that I might aiblins fasten a horse-shoe without laming the beast, and there I stop. Now this is not being o'erwise or o'er-presumptuous, because these accomplishments with me have only occupied the time that anither would have given up to games or follies. A man thinks himself none the worse soldier if he can excel at billiards or make a good book on a race-course. Now, instead of games or races, I've just amused myself with one or two useful acquirements."

"I have no doubt whatever that you've been wise and prudent in so doing; but they do say (don't

they ?) that if a man will only stick to his own business or profession he will find that enough for him."

"Very true. But like all these saws and maxims, this, if right in the main, is wrong if adhered to ree-gorously. In the first place, it never can be exactly carried out ; because men, as I showed ye, must have a little change of pursuits, which commonly, but not necessarily, takes the form of recreations. Secondly, considering our Colonial Empire and the careers that are marked out for many Englishmen, especially the meelitary, it would simply put a period to most of our undertakings if every man were to confine himself strictly to his own *métier*, like one of those puir Indian bodies. It is by being able to turn our hands to anything, that we have spread ourselves over the whole globe. We canna be sending at once a full staff of every department o' knowledge, although every department will probably soon be wanted where we are going ; and so it is that they who would descend upon a strange land must know not only how to get themselves there, but how to defend and shelter themselves, and how to make existence possible out of very small means. As to our meelitary work, we've only to read the narratives of our expeditions to learn how essential it is that our troops should be ready and able for almost every kind of work. Strategy and tactics,

though grand studies no doubt, and undoubtedly essential to success, would be almost wasted in our case if the lads hadna the versateelity which enables them to do all kinds of rough work by turns."

"That is not the way in which the profession is generally viewed. Officers enter it with the idea that, when they get beyond drills and arms, they are to go on to the art of war, which deals with marching, manœuvring, and gunpowder. And soldiers are enlisted on the understanding that they are to pass through the awkward squad, stand sentry, fight, face all weathers and climates, and take care how they get drunk. It's hardly fair to engage men for one kind of services, and then to wear them out with work of other kinds."

"Well, a sensible man would surely be aware that a sair deal of wark falls to the lot of the forces on sairvice which is not told of in the Airticles of War or the Queen's Regulations. I'm not sure but it might be better to let all hands know more plainly what's expected of them. But a very short foreign service makes the duties plain to everybody; and he is but a gawkie pairson who, when he sees the necessity of doing a good deal more than he bargained for, doesna willingly give his aid in all ways that can contreebute to the general good result. That's been my feeling, and I hope that I've always acted up to it; indeed,

he who does not so act deserves the name neither of a soldier nor a patriot, but of a mercenary."

Du Lys, debilitated by illness, and far away from the society and the vanities which had been wont to influence him, was impressed by the remarks of the old soldier, and began to follow up the reflections which he had made on the lady's Indian narrative by some very new thoughts about his own profession. He judged, it is true, that his professional career had been cut short, and that, after the cruel usage he had received, he could never stoop to return to the public service. But yet it was a fact that the only portion of his life that had been worth leading or remembering was passed in the tented field; and however angry he might be, this was the period to which his mind would naturally revert. Many a conference with Mackechnie, like that which has been recorded, helped to furnish him with such ideas as are entertained by a large part of the profession—a part of which he had hitherto known little or nothing. It is to be hoped that he imbibed some sound instruction while he ate his grapes.

There was one other subject which engaged his thoughts as much as his warlike recollections, and that was the cottage-girl with whom he had strayed about the fields and lanes at Brigend. The image of Thyrza came often to him, but it was accompanied by a bitter feeling. He felt himself to be a

disgraced man, and fancied that Thyrza would appreciate his altered position ; and though he would have rejoiced to see her again, he shrunk from the thought of being lowered in her regard. He imagined the girl to be still in the same condition of life as when he parted from her—married perhaps, but married to a clown. He knew nothing of her real history. His relatives—who lived, as has been said, in much seclusion, and on whose property Mrs Knowles did not reside—though they had probably heard something of the recovery of the Claybarrow property, had not taken much note of it, pressed as they were by their private anxiety. And Colonel du Lys, who had never mentioned Thyrza's name in his brother's house, asked no question of them concerning her. He thought of Thyrza as he thought of his life in the field. They were pleasant reminiscences, but they were altogether things of the past. Of the future, he did not incline just now to indulge in any forecast whatever. But while both he and Mackechnie hope that they are regaining health in the balmy air of Meran, it may be well to look again at Thyrza Knowles, and to ascertain how things are going with her.

CHAPTER XI.

RUBBING OFF THE RUST.

THYRZA had enjoyed the summer of 1855 very fairly. For the first time since her early childhood, the fine weather, and the flowers, and woods, and green fields had been delights of which she could take her fill, not simply accidents which on the whole made toil more endurable, and which were associated with the saving of fuel, although hot days and nights in regard to work are not altogether a benefit. Notwithstanding the sudden cessation of the old drudgery, the days had never been too long for her—she could employ every hour of them. Her mother and she had a few acquaintances in and about Wyde, who did not allow them to stagnate in solitude ; but it was remarkable that though people of rank had not hesitated to hold out a friendly hand to the widow as soon as she was freed from the chains of penury, yet the gentility of Wyde was not eager to notice the late cottager, and

the sister of the late rough auctioneer. Young ladies who sate on cushions in church and drove about in one-horse carriages, and who had not objected patronisingly to commend the handsome peasant-girl, did not at all relish the entering of the said handsome girl into rivalry with themselves. She had been very well in her place, but as an upstart it would be most imprudent to encourage her.

Twice or thrice during the summer Thyrsa received a pleasant and tolerably long letter from Emma Seward. These letters said very little about the gaieties of London, and not much (though they did say a little) about the fashions. About matters connected with the Vert district they said a great deal, and about public affairs and the hoped-for peace they gave the last particulars. Thyrsa scarcely expected that Emma would write at all, and she was proud and grateful to receive letters the style of which showed that to write them had not been irksome. Yet it was from these letters that came the cloud that cast its shadow over Thyrsa, and forbade her thoroughly to enjoy the season.

Emma had heard, of course, of du Lys's return to England, and of what had occurred to him since. Hardyknute, and indeed many other of her friends, had seen him, and had been much interested in what befell him. Most of them regarded him as more or

less of a martyr. He did not in his anxiety while his case awaited decision, nor in his wrath after his fate was known, go at all into ladies' society, and Miss Seward had not herself seen him. But the case of a person who had so recently been distinguished in the *beau monde* was very much discussed. Emma Seward would gladly have avoided all reference to it in her letters. Her quick discernment had perceived that in some way or other Thyrza was a good deal interested in the handsome unfortunate, and she would fain have avoided a subject which would probably prove disagreeable. But she reflected that Thyrza, from the newspapers, and from the gossip of the Vert district, must infallibly hear of the matter, and would be likely to hear of it incorrectly, and then not to understand it. She might, in fact, fret herself with the belief that the mischance was much greater than it really was. Good-nature therefore prevailed over disinclination to mention the affair, and Emma gave the heads of it as plainly and indifferently as she could.

She explained to Thyrza that du Lys, after he became a captain and lieutenant-colonel, had, on account of some disagreement, wholly distinct from engagements with the enemy, been sent home, and been placed on half-pay; which would cause him to be unemployed for a time, but would not necessarily injure his prospects much—indeed his friends hoped it would

injure them very little, as an opportunity of reinstating him might soon occur, and they would be sure to do their utmost for him on the arrival of the opportunity. And she further said that he had been very little seen, except in public offices and clubs, that his relations were going abroad, and that he would accompany them, so that there was little chance of his visiting the Tower of Lys at present. Emma hoped that she had saved Thyrza pain by telling the true story. Her natural kindness would have made her hope so had she been wholly indifferent about the matter herself; but, for some secret reasons of her own, she felt really grateful to Thyrza for having anything like an attachment.

It so happened that Thyrza had not learned anything of du Lys's affliction until Emma wrote. She had probably turned over many newspapers whose leading articles had commented pretty vigorously on his affairs; but poor simple Thyrza gave all her attention to the intelligence from the seat of war, never imagining that any intelligence emanating from quarters nearer home could have been of importance in her eyes. The correspondent of the paper which she commonly studied was one of those who had been won over to side with the influential classes, and he had said nothing about the scrape into which du Lys fell, nor about his embarkation for England. Thus she had

given her whole mind to that which would have had no interest for her if she had known the true state of things, and had neglected columns which, had she guessed at their contents, she would have spelt over and over, and studied by day and by night.

It may be imagined how Thyrsa's heart leaped—how her spirit went and came, as it were—when she learned that du Lys had actually been in England,—that but for an accident he would have been in her immediate neighbourhood once more. His recent propinquity at first engrossed her thoughts and feelings, and, as she slowly recovered from the agitation into which that had thrown her, she recognised the blessing of her tardy information; for had she known of his being in London, and looked day by day for his coming into the Vert district, her hopes deferred would have tormented her in a degree which she shuddered to think of. Though he had been so very near, yet he was still, at the moment of thinking, nearer than she had thought. He was safe, too, from the dangers of war: and from these things came, for the moment, a little balm to Thyrsa's spirit; and she grew calm, and turned her to the other items of Emma's communication.

Thyrsa had but a hazy idea of half-pay; but she understood that du Lys's brilliant career was for the present interrupted, and that this had arisen out of some disagreement. She had no doubt whatever that

du Lys had been cruelly wronged; she hated his accuser or adversary; but as for the "authority" that had considered du Lys deserving of censure, whether that authority sat on the throne, or was a Minister of State, or lounged at a desk with a pen behind his ear, it was an utterly unjust and malicious authority, and she hated it. Of what could any man or woman be made who could knowingly and deliberately prevent the renown of one so noble, so accomplished, and so admirable? She did not doubt that he would win honour all the faster, once this little check were removed; but she felt sorely aggrieved that there had been a check at all. The image which she bore in her mind and worshipped had been most villanously tarnished, and the stain was intolerable. Du Lys shorn of one of his attributes could not be to her the same person who had so captivated her fancy, and she yearned for the restoration of her hero to the pristine condition of *sans reproche*. There be maidens who would bless small blots that might hasten the return from danger, safe and sound, of those dear to them; but Thyrza, when she had reflected, was not one of these. She could not bear to abate one jot of her admired one's perfections. Much as her soul desired to behold du Lys again, she almost fancied that she would rather not see him until he had put aside all imputation of blame. Perhaps it was Thyrza's Norman

blood which made her regard the honour of her knight as dearly as the knight himself. Her wrath and her want of precise information took a good deal, in her estimation, from the glory of the summer. This is why it was said above that she had enjoyed the season "fairly," which is but a moderate expression.

Mrs Knowles, freed from anxiety and work, did really derive more unmixed enjoyment from the long placid days than did her daughter. She was told that, for some reason or other which she did not care to dissect, Colonel du Lys had now left the theatre of war; but not even to her did Thyrza hint that he had appeared to have been found wanting: so this matter did not trouble her much. Improved fortune and the mild weather together produced in her an improved bodily condition.

The train of amusements came to an end at last. The London season, the races, the moors, the rivers, the watering-places, ran their appointed course. Just before Michaelmas the princes of the Vert district began to turn their faces towards home; and one after another they sought their fields, mindful of pheasants waiting to be shot, and of foxes which would be out of training in a week or two, and ready to try conclusions with men and dogs. Thyrza welcomed her fashionable friends with real satisfaction. She would, for their own sakes, have rejoiced to see again people who had

shown her so much kindness ; but she had become of late especially desirous of their return, that she might be made to understand more clearly du Lys's case, and might learn whether there was any sign of repentance among the chiefs of the army, and whether any step had been made by them in the direction of justice towards the most meritorious of mortals.

Emma Seward returned browned and happy. She had been with her father, and some friends who were not neighbours, on the Rhine and the Danube. The excursions had been pleasant ; and now it was especially pleasant to see Ayresfield again, and to be near old friends—one old friend in particular, *not* Thyrza Knowles. Lord Hardyknute had, as usual, been doing all kinds of things—had broken away from town immediately after Goodwood, had just looked into North Britain to see that everything was going right there, had crossed to Norway, had spent a week in the Baltic fleet, had come back in a man-of-war, and attended a great agricultural meeting in the north of England, had run across to Paris to see what our allies thought of the war and of things in general, had been drawn away to a French watering-place, had got back barely in time for Doncaster, and had now arrived at home with all sorts of work before him ; for he was a master of hounds, he was an improver in many ways, he took part in all public matters in the Vert district, and had the chief

management of many. He being very popular, and accessible to everybody, time always seemed scarce with him ; and therefore, at the beginning of autumn, he was deep in business—not overwhelmed, an observer would say, for his fair open face had not a line of care on it, he was never seen out of temper, and somehow or other business moved along. *He* said that everybody was willing to help him, and so it was no wonder if a good deal was got through ; other people said that he would lend a hand to anything that was honourable or sociable or charitable, and that it was difficult to think how the district could ever get on without him. It was an error to think (as some held) that he had a very long head ; but he had what was better than that—viz., a kind and considerate heart, which seemed to leaven the hearts of all about him. There are cases where reciprocal good feeling makes more way with business than the keenest mistrust or the smartest organisation.

Miss Seward met Thyrza Knowles again as if they had been old and dear friends, and kissed her. Then she began to inquire about Thyrza's studies and walks and rides, and about some few people whom they both knew—showing that she had not forgotten, and would not seem to have forgotten, the incidents of their former acquaintance.

“And your Turkish treasures,” said Emma ; “of

course by this time the donor has discovered himself?"

This was a trying question. It seemed to Thyrza that her discerning friend had made a guess not far from the truth. She answered steadily, however, "No, indeed; he keeps himself as mysteriously in shadow as before." After this question and answer, Emma thought it would be indelicate to mention du Lys if Thyrza did not. And Thyrza, though she was most eager for information regarding him, would not name him, having a little plan of her own for ascertaining how the matter stood.

"Well, and how has Montezuma behaved?" asked Emma. "Do you like him as much as before?"

"Oh, a charming horse!" answered Thyrza; "but I really must have a horse of my own now."

"Well, I daresay you will get one. And I hope you mean to have a horse that you can follow the hounds with sometimes. I cannot resist having a gallop across-country now and then; and you, perfect horsewoman that you are, should be still more ready for the sport."

"Oh, is it right for us to do that?" said Thyrza, her blood tingling at the thought.

"Right enough, as we will do it. There are often ladies in the field. But we are a month from that enjoyment as yet. And now, how to make this Octo-

ber pass pleasantly. I will tell you what I have been thinking we might do."

And thereupon did Miss Seward detail a course of recreation and amusement, which showed that Thyrza had been much in her thoughts, and that she, Thyrza, had been principally considered in the whole arrangement—which was intended to introduce her to many pleasures of high life of which, as yet, she had barely heard the names. It was quite clear that Thyrza's fine friends were by no means growing tired of her.

But what of Lord Hardyknute? Well, his lordship, some two days after his arrival at Malmseymead, snatched a moment to canter over to Beech Lodge, where he found the ladies at home. He apologised for having delayed so long to wait upon them, but excused himself by representing the endless calls upon his time, the requirements of stables and kennel, the county business, and the claims of his tenantry. He asked about their passage of the summer, and especially whether Thyrza had found the horse to carry her satisfactorily. And he told them the whole of his own adventures, which he related amusingly, pausing at the end of every chapter of them to say, "Well, I must have the pleasure of recounting the rest at another opportunity. I have taken up an unreasonable quantity of your time, and consumed more of my own than I had a right to." Then he would continue

with, "But I must tell you of what happened on board The Piping Bullfinch;" or, "The horses in France make a perfectly pitiable show this year. Everything decent gone to the Crimea. By the by, only think, it was on the cast of a sixpence at one time whether I should run out to Balaklava or not. The Duke of Broadgrip was going thither in his yacht—probably is there at this moment. He was to take two or three Englishmen of my acquaintance, and he offered a cabin to my friend the Vicomte Castonnières, who accepted on condition that I would go too. The duke very politely said the arrangement proposed by the Vicomte would make his party perfect, and that he was delighted to find that I was within reach. He then came and pressed me so heartily to join them, that if I could possibly have resisted the demands that were being made upon me to attend to this and to be present at that, I really think I must have accepted. And then fancy me in a camp among soldiers! However, I was obliged at last to decline; and then occurred a curious, a very curious thing, which I can't half tell you now, only I may mention the outline of it, which won't take a minnte." In this way he consumed an hour and a half, and didn't then seem disposed to go; but there happened to be a positive engagement which he could not keep if he did not bring his present visit to an end. When he was

departing, he took the opportunity of saying, that as he was quite unable, while so much occupied, to visit his neighbours as much as he desired, he would take it as a great favour if the ladies whom he was addressing would come and spend a few days at Malmseymead. There was some hesitation on Mrs Knowles's part ; but this was obviated by Thyrsa, who evidently wished to pay the visit. Then Thyrsa, barring for a moment his lordship's retreat, said she trusted that he would now be able to discover a horse for her, and was answered with an assurance that he would do all he could, and that they would talk the matter over at his house ; but he really must go now. And he went.

“How could you, Thyrsa?” Mrs Knowles said, as soon as he was away. “How could you be so rash as to accept? We are to go on Tuesday, and there will be no time to prepare ; and neither of us has anything ready—positively we have not anything to wear befitting such a visit. If my new grey silk were only made up, or if you had not allowed that plausible Miss Gore to put you off so long with your two foulards, it would not have been so awkward ; but now there is nothing more than was got last year, and I see by the fashion-book that things are so much altered—waists are a great deal higher, and nobody can be seen at night without a *berthe*. Then, you know, that *moire antique*, although——”

"Don't be vexed, mother, I beg you," pleaded Thyrza; "the people among whom we are going are as little likely as any in the world to make ill-natured criticisms on our dress. They know our history, and would think none the better of us for knowing the fashions to a shade, as if we had been doing nothing since we came out of the mire but study how to ape the Queen's Court. I believe if you appeared in the drawing-room at Malmseymead with the old black dress you wore in St Ann's Cottage (you always looked neat and handsome in it), not a soul would notice it censoriously, or make the least difference in behaviour to you in consequence. Let us, if we cannot manage better, wear the very same dresses we wore there last winter; but I want very much to go there at once, and I'll tell you why. You must know there has been some terrible injustice done to Colonel du Lys."

"My dear, you don't say so! I thought he had come home, and been promoted, and that he would soon be in the Vert again. And I was wondering whether, if, as things are now, he were to——"

"Don't go on, mother, please; because it isn't as you think. He didn't come home by his own wish. They sent him back on some pretence; and now, by an act of unparalleled tyranny, they have stopped his going against the Russians altogether. He isn't out of the

army, but he is kept away from the wars and from the soldiers, until the evil counsel that is hindering him can be overcome, and justice can be done once more."

"This is very sad, my love ; and I am more sorry than I can tell ; such a good young man as he seemed to be ! But what has this to do with our going to Malmseymead ? What can we do in the matter ?"

"Do !" echoed Thyrza, "I am afraid we can do nothing. I wish we could. Oh, if I could come near the cruel, envious placeman that is oppressing him, I could hate and despise him—I could trample on him, so !"

Mrs Knowles did not make immediate answer. For a moment Colonel du Lys was out of her mind, as was everything else except Thyrza, whose attitude, as she illustrated the approved method of trampling on a peccant official, it was really a treat to see. An emanation from the spirit of her uncle Betwold seemed to animate her, or perhaps it was from the Lady Thyrza Valery who shot the highwayman that the spirit was derived. Staid, dispassionate Thyrza, who so seldom allowed her feelings to have vent ! "Bless me, what a glorious girl she is ! how I wish she could be seen when she shows a little warmth like that !" were the words that passed through the mother's mind. It was a pity, certainly, that the Thyrza of the minute could not be secured. Then Mrs Knowles sighed, and returned to their muttons, saying—

"Steady, Thyrza—steady, my dear. What is the use of our talking like that? It is not a year ago since our feeling was one of thankfulness that we were not trampled *upon*. We shall deserve to go back to our poverty if we forget the humility that it taught us."

"I know we've had great mercies," answered Thyrza, who stood rebuked. "I wouldn't have said it for anything about ourselves. But *he* was never a peasant: no one has any right to treat *him* in such a wicked—wicked—unjusti—fiable——"

Here her excitement escaped by the usual outlet; but it was only a change of becoming moods. Thyrza in tears was not less worth regarding than Thyrza resentful. The girl did not grovel when she wept. She had her emotion in hand, although just now she found relief in giving it its head. When she was a villager, her spirit made her conform to the circumstances of her lot (which is one of the best things that our spirits can do for any of us), but it wasn't cowed nor ashamed; and now that competence had come to her, and she could claim kindred with the great, she knew how to conform still. It might have been the little outburst of Zenobia, or of Margaret of Anjou, that had Mrs Knowles for sole beholder!

"But you haven't told me, now," said Mrs Knowles, harking back with gentle caution, "why you were so desirous of making this visit at Malmseymead."

“Well, mother, it’s just this: I want to be near somebody, or some persons rather, who understand exactly what has happened, and who can explain it to us, and tell us how it will be remedied at last. It’s been fretting me for weeks, and I wouldn’t go to any but the best informed, because everybody would pretend to know; and stupid people, without intending it, might have distressed me with silly accounts that had no foundation.”

“Will any one know at Malmseymead?”

“Lord Hardyknute *saw* him. He most likely knows the whole case; or, if he does not, knows where to learn the true particulars. I want you, mother, to ask him about it when I am by. And you must ask when Miss Seward isn’t present.”

“Well, I should like to know myself; so we’ll arrange that somehow. But I’m afraid, my poor Thyrza, you allow yourself to think too much about this young man. What though he may have sent you the slippers (and we’re not sure that he did), that’s no proof that he would be ready to marry you. He may have seen somebody since he came home that may have put every thought of my poor girl out of his head.”

“Yes, I know he may; and if so, I shall try to bear it: but I want to know about his trouble all the same, and I don’t want people to fancy that I am interested. Now, you’ll help me, won’t you?”

As the company was assembling in the drawing-room at Malmseymead, a few evenings after the above conversation took place, a tall, middle-aged lady, of very distinguished appearance, became suddenly animated, and made continual use of her eyeglass. "Do you know her, eh? that girl in blue—an amazing fine young woman," said she to a lady to whom she had been talking.

"Really, no; I don't. Never saw her before. Can't have been presented, or we should have seen her somewhere in the season."

"I positively must know who she is. I'll cross over and ask Lord Hardyknute. He must know."

"But stop a moment. She must surely be the young lady who came unexpectedly into some land the other day. Your ladyship knows the story."

"No, indeed. How? what? Tell me."

"Well, I must speak very low. Mother a washer-woman, or something of that sort; girl carried bundles of linen on her back. All at once they become entitled to property, and then it turns out that they are exceedingly well——"

The sentence was not finished, because the lady to whom it was addressed was led away by Lord Hardyknute, she being the daughter of a duke. They had not been long at table before she returned to the charge.

“Can’t take my eyes off that fine young woman in blue with whom Lord Roods appears to be so much taken. Shocking to hear she’s been a laundress.”

“My dear Lady Sarah, nothing of the sort. Her mother is the widow of a yeoman, certainly—man who farmed some of du Lys’s property—but she is descended from one of the Earls of High Vert.”

“How curious! I thought, when I first saw her, that she must be a person of condition—might be a princess by her appearance. I have got a High Vert for an ancestor. We must be related. Are they pleasant people?”

“Particularly so. They were always well-bred. I knew them in the days of their poverty.”

“How very charming! I must claim relationship. It is like a fairy tale. You can’t think how interested I feel.”

The speaker, Lady Sarah Gard, was the widow of a very wealthy commoner, to whom she had not borne a child. She was rich and enthusiastic, but very benevolent, and much esteemed. The ladies had not been five minutes in the drawing-room after dinner before Lady Sarah requested Miss Seward to present Mrs and Miss Knowles to her.

“Such a fine October!” said her ladyship, when the ceremony had been gone through. “I have been in the coverts this afternoon, and the air was positively

charming. It is milder here than in Leicestershire. I am sure it is."

"If your ladyship is at all delicate, you would find it cold enough here in the winter," answered Mrs Knowles.

"You speak feelingly. You have suffered, I am afraid."

"Some months ago, yes—rather severely."

"Ah, that is sad. But your daughter here, Miss Knowles, does not suffer."

"No, she bears weather excellently. I tell her she ought to have been a camp-follower."

"And gone to the wars disguised, as some ladies did to the Crusades." Then turning to Thyrsa, "I hear you are related to the High Vert family. I too am half an Angevine. We must be related; is it not so?"

"I should be glad to find that it is so," answered Thyrsa. "But I must confess that I do not correctly know my own pedigree. Your ladyship will think me unworthy of ancestors with whom I am unacquainted."

"No, I am sure you are not that—only charmingly *naïve*. I don't think it shows the very best taste to be ready to talk of one's pedigree; only this war, you know, in the East, has brought out some of the old pride of race. But to leave that matter; tell me how you enjoy this exceptional weather. I want to know

what a healthy person's idea of amusement in a fine autumn is."

"I am a good walker, and I ride too," answered Thyrza.

"Ah yes, of course. Then you will know how to pity me. The doctors have forbidden riding these five years; and as for walking, they need not prohibit that, for I can't do it. So to-day I just went in a pony-chair to the side of the brakes, and saw a little of the work of destruction. Ah me!"

"But your ladyship will probably recover strength in time, and be able again to participate in amusements."

"No, never. I am never to be well again; but by observance of physicians' rules, I may contrive to keep going. So a carriage and a drawing-room are the places for me. In the winter my life is passed principally at home, where my friends are kind enough to come often and see me. I trust it may not be long, before I receive my new-found cousins there."

Lady Sarah Gard "took fancies" sometimes, but they were generally fancies that were reasonable, and had not to be repented of. She had taken a great fancy to Thyrza Knowles; and though she knew better than to be troublesome in attentions, more especially where she might be thought to be patronising, she let Thyrza understand that she had found favour in her sight,

and was indeed throughout this visit extremely kind to her.

It was on the third day of the stay of the mother and daughter at Malmseymead that Mrs Knowles received a business letter from Mr Darke about a not very important matter, but still one which they desired to talk over a little before they decided. So they detached themselves in the afternoon from the various groups which were seeking amusement in their several ways, and retreated to the library, which was empty and still. There, as the evening drew on, they sat on a leather cushion in discussion; while the sun, which had cleared himself of clouds after he had sunk below the level of the blinds, was shooting in many-coloured rays, and partially variegating volumes and furniture, and making the space which he couldn't reach look dark by comparison. Mrs Knowles had seen libraries in her younger days; but Thyrza had never before seen such a collection of books, and she rather wondered how the world, though it had been so many years about it, could have produced such a quantity of literature as met her look from all sides. But thoughts about books were only just beginning, for the business matter had taken a little time to settle, in the way in which they addressed themselves to it; and they were not destined to proceed very far with remarks on literature—for, to the surprise of the ladies,

a door which they had thought to be part of a bookshelf turned on its hinges, and there entered to them their noble host, Lord Hardyknute.

"Dear me!" said his lordship, "I thought everybody was abroad. And you ladies have had enough of activity, I suppose, and have come to enjoy a little repose before dinner."

"No," answered Mrs Knowles, "that is not quite right. We had a little arrangement to consider, and came hither to attend to it in quiet. It is quite disposed of now; so if you have come in to write, or for any sort of business, we shall not be tempted to disturb you."

"Nay; I have run away from writing, and the business of which I get more than enough all the day long, and have come to lounge away half an hour till it is time to dress. I should have had a laugh over 'Punch,' or I might by possibility have fallen asleep, if I had found nobody here; it will be far more refreshing if you will let me talk to you a little."

"You know you promised to talk to me about a horse," said Thyrza, while at the same time she pressed her mother's arm, to make her understand that here was the opportunity for making the inquiries which they had agreed on.

"I am afraid I am not quite ready about the horse, Miss Knowles; I have had scarcely a minute to my-

self since I made the promise. And if Montezuma suits you for the present, I had rather not act hurriedly."

"Well, Lord Hardyknute," said Mrs Knowles, "there is something else that I much wish to speak to you about; and, if you allow me, I will speak now. You remember that my late husband was a tenant of the du Lys family, concerning which I feel, of course, a degree of interest. I have been much pained to learn lately that Captain (no, I believe he is Colonel) du Lys has in some way been unfortunate in his profession. Can you tell me what it is that he has done or suffered?"

"Why, what he has *done*, I believe, is little enough. But he has managed in some way or other, as any man may now and then do, to lay himself open to the attacks of the party who are discontented with the war, and the Government, and the Legislature, and the Court—indeed, with everything. Now, when discontent gets too much of a head, it is better for a time not to aggravate it by opposition. But this my friend du Lys does not appear to understand. What is right, he says, popular clamour cannot make wrong. And he has refused to throw oil on the waters, but has rather defied the dangerous spirit that is abroad."

Mrs Knowles saw Thyrsa's eyes gleam as this was said. Thyrsa triumphed in du Lys's constancy and unselfish loyalty to principle.

"Do you understand what it is they accuse him of?" asked Mrs Knowles.

"I cannot say that I do distinctly. I believe some duty not strictly military was imposed on Major du Lys, and that in some way an officer not of the Guards—a person of no consideration, in fact—had a power of interfering, and did so. Du Lys resented this as a grievance and an impertinence, and would not make any concession whatever. The newspaper people, or some of them, of course sided with the obscure officer against the Guardsman. It seems the Staff in the Crimea had had private hints from home of how popular feeling was tending, and, to get rid of a disagreeable business, sent du Lys home on his getting the regimental promotion to captain and lieutenant-colonel. The people at home could not face the clamour that was being made, and put du Lys on what is called half-pay—that means that he is still in the army but not in a regiment, that his pay is reduced, and that he is not allowed to serve for the present."

"And this is English fairness and justice!" said Thyrsa. "An officer fights and is victorious, and is wounded, and is praised and rewarded one day, and the next day his prospects are ruined because some particular party at home is clamouring."

"Well, I must say," said Lord Hardyknute, "that I believe the country means to be both fair and just."

But when there is a suspicion of favouritism or undue influence, as there has been of late, the people get excited for the moment, and lose the power of judging fairly. A portion of the press always endeavours to increase their exasperation when they are in such a mood ; and I am afraid that persons who have even less excuse than the press for what they do, inflame them to the uttermost. When the ebullition subsides, right and reason prevail again. In the meantime, it is folly to madly increase the discontent and fury for the sake of trifles."

"And one must do what is not right simply at the dictation of a furious party !" said Thyrza, who had now fairly taken up the argument.

"That is a strong way of putting it, Miss Knowles. Often these matters are morally neither right nor wrong, and one may conscientiously act either way. There may be a concession of one's strict rights and privileges to make ; but in a trifling affair, that is of no consequence."

"I would be torn in pieces first !"

Thyrza Knowles was in the light of the setting-sun, and this time there was a spectator of her look and action as she uttered "a bit of her mind ;" for Lord Hardyknute, in a shaded part of the library, watched—no, not watched, but was for a moment struck mute by, the sight of her. He thought he had never seen

anything so magnificent, and he knew that it was all simple and genuine.

There was a pause. Lord Hardyknute was so busy with his eyes that he could find no voice ; and Thyrsa, a little confused by her own energy, was fain to subside. It was Mrs Knowles who restored equilibrium by asking—

“And do you know where Colonel du Lys is now, Lord Hardyknute?”

“When I last heard of him he was at Munich, and going on with his brother’s family to the Tyrol.” Then he added, “The matter can be all put right again, you know, when the excitement is over. The malcontents will soon forget du Lys, and turn to something else ; and then he can be quietly reinstated, and everything go on as before.”

“Do you think they will soon replace him?” asked the widow.

“Yes, I should think so ; but I really can’t tell what they intend. Du Lys got huffy, you know, and went off in a rage. He should have waited about, and tried to bring people to reason.”

“I wish I knew some of these people who are persecuting him,” said Thyrsa.

“What would you do, Miss Knowles?”

“I would—I would try to make them ashamed of themselves, and to make them render him justice,”

answered Thyrza, ending her sentence in a softer tone than that in which she began.

"You are anxious, then, about the result?"

"Well," put in Mrs Knowles, "we were once tenants of the house, and we know some little of the young man himself, and we don't like to feel that he is suffering unjustly."

"No, of course you don't. I wonder, now, in whose hands du Lys left his case, or whether he was angry enough to go off recklessly and let things settle themselves. He is capable of it. I am sorry I can give you no more precise information. But now let me ring for lights, and show you some sketches from the seat of war which have come down only to-day."

And so ended that important conference. Lord Hardyknute exhibited, and explained as well as he could, the drawings on the table, and filled up very agreeably the time till the first bell rang. He was no sooner in his dressing-room than his mind was back to the vision of Thyrza in the beams of the setting-sun. "She was a splendid young woman when she was almost in rags," thought he. "I always said that. But to know what she really can be, one must see her moved a little. Odd how blood runs, indeed! That's the Norman stream. She's got it, spite of crosses and chances. I can fancy her queen of a tournament. Wouldn't she have 'rained influence'? By George,

how the men would have fought! Will marry well, I've no doubt. Lots of men be deuced proud to hear her announced by their names. Not every fellow that she'd look at. Well, well, I must settle about Eastman's farm, and find somebody to take Whisk's place as whip, instead of indulging in vain imaginations about fine girls." If his lordship saw what was right, he didn't do it, for he was musing upon Thyrza Knowles when he fell asleep that night. Thyrza Knowles, when she retired to rest, was not thinking of him. She was thinking of the amazing quantity of iniquity that there is in Governments, and in the Government of England in particular; and of how smartly she would rectify it, if the reins could only be placed in her hands for a season. It is most probable that Miss Knowles knew nothing of the story of Abon Hassan; yet, like many another enthusiast, she was as anxious as Abon Hassan had been to exercise the Caliphate for a day.

It was very fortunate that the interview with Lord Hardyknute was held when it was, for on the following day Thyrza was engaged to drive with Lady Sarah Gard alone. The weather was splendid—a bright, calm, autumnal afternoon. They drove away beyond the country which Thyrza knew so well, having often trudged over it, and crossed into an unknown region. Thyrza, who had been full of information about the

places and objects which they passed, was now obliged to confess ignorance.

"Why, we are not so far from Wyde," said Lady Sarah, "and you knew everything so well till within this last half mile."

"Your ladyship forgets," said Thyrsa, "that I could never get farther from home than my own feet would take me, and that I had seldom time at my disposal to walk even as far as I could."

"But I hear you are an excellent horsewoman."

"I learned to ride and to be fearless of horses in my childhood. Since my father died, I never was on horseback until our change of fortune—except once," the last words spoken with some hesitation.

"Except once; and how did the exception happen?"

"Oh, well, it was an accidental thing; but I was on a horse."

"My dear, your complexion *is simply lovely*. Is it the fresh air, or does the exceptional ride recall a pleasant adventure?"

"I suppose I am shocked at thinking of what I did. I was only a village girl, you must remember. I was hurrying for a doctor for my mother, and I rode on a man's saddle. It seems now so odd. A gentleman saw my distress and lent me his horse, though he had never seen me before."

"I don't wonder at it in the least, if you looked as

you do now. And you rode away on a strange horse, and on the man's saddle? Why, you are a perfect heroine!"

"I feel ashamed now; but, you know, I had been accustomed to ride imperfectly broken horses on any saddle I could get, sometimes without a saddle."

"And your knight who mounted you, did you ever see him again?"

"Yes."

"Only *yes*. Would it be impertinent to ask his name?"

"It was," said Thyrza, looking curiously across the field on her own side of the carriage—"it was a gentleman called du Lys."

"What! Sir Geoffrey?"

"No."

"Then it must have been Beauclerc. There are but two of them left, except a child. It must have been Colonel du Lys, about whom there has been some fuss lately. Why, he is a relation of mine—a relation of *ours*. I have a great liking for him."

"He was very kind; and I found the doctor, and mother was soon better. It was just before the war began."

"Perhaps Beauclerc may be at the Tower of Lys before long. He will hardly recognise in his new relation the girl whom he allowed to ride his horse."

"Oh, he has forgotten all about it."

"Perhaps so. And now, don't you think we had better be looking homewards? We have all the way back to go, remember."

Just before dinner it was announced that the noble host had been obliged to go to London on business, so they had to get through the evening without his happy, open face to beam on their proceedings. Indeed, it was rather stupid all round. Lady Sarah was tired after her long day in the air, and retired early. Her ladyship was, more than before, charmed with Thyrza Knowles. She dearly liked a little bit of adventure, provided that it was really adventure, and not a performance executed for the sake of display; and when she found what Thyrza, usually so retiring, could do on occasion, she warmed to her cousin. And to think of Beauclerc lending this poor girl his horse—Beauclerc, who was such an exquisite, and who would almost have ignored the fact of a peasant girl's existence except in a chorus or ballet! It would be a good story to confound him with some day when he should be superlatively fine.

Nobody, when Hardyknute was present, would have supposed that he influenced much the amusement or occupation of the company, so little did he put himself in the foreground; yet now, without him, there was no unity of plan, and they dispersed into groups, finding the evening hard to dispose of. Thyrza and Emma

wandered into the billiard-room, where a member of the House of Commons, who never was heard of in Parliament, was explaining where his talent really lay, and executing strokes that would have excited the jealousy of Kentfield. He was a small young man, with a pallid complexion; and a friend of his who was present assured the ladies that he generally at night rolled himself up and slept in a pocket of the table, which made an admirable hammock—also that he lived principally on chalk. His feats soon ceased to be entertaining; and Thyrza, for her part, was not sorry when it was time to separate for the night.

The next morning the ladies, who were about to depart, were relieved of all fear of not taking leave of Lord Hardyknute when they saw him at the breakfast-table, looking as placid as if there had been no departure from his ordinary routine.

“I am delighted to see your lordship,” said Mrs Knowles. “How fast you must have travelled! You have been in London, have you not?”

“Yes, in London. No, I don’t think it such very quick travelling for a man in good health. You run up in the morning, get a little business over before dinner, then dine quietly, and come back through the night.”

“But, besides having to do things in a great hurry

(which I always think fatiguing), you lose your night's rest by that arrangement."

"No, no, indeed. Pardon me; I can sleep sound in a carriage, I assure you. Then a bath and breakfast make me quite forget that I haven't been in bed."

Miss Seward was early in the breakfast-room, and very curious to know why her cousin had gone so suddenly to town. Parliament was not sitting; there was no public news of importance; and his movements on his own affairs were not usually made secretly or in a hurry. She did not, however, receive much enlightenment on the subject, unless she afterwards got it from him in private. He had a heap of things to do, he said, and thought it better to set off at once, and make an end of them. When pressed concerning this heap of things, he could only recollect that he wanted to have his hair cut, and that Charley Probyn, of the Austrian Embassy, was passing through London on his way from Scotland to Vienna. Now his hair was not shorter than it had been the day before yesterday; and Miss Seward happened to know that Mr Probyn had gone on three days before, because he had undertaken a commission from her father. And this unusual mystery vexed the young lady a good deal.

"And you are really going to leave us, Mrs

Knowles? Your visit seems to have only begun, and it is ended."

"That is very kind. To us it has gone very quickly. But there are calls at home which one cannot overlook."

"I suppose," said Thyrza, "it is of no use to say more about the horse. I seem only to make myself troublesome."

"No, you are not troublesome, I assure you; and if you were, I would gladly take any trouble for you. Put up with Montezuma for a little longer, and I doubt not we shall get the affair managed."

As the hour of separating drew near, Thyrza and Emma Seward had a great deal to say to each other, and were together. Mrs Knowles, alone in her chamber, was in a pleasant reverie, thinking of past and present, and of the changes of which her life had been so full. Her mind was away at the Sandacres, intent upon her married life, when a message reached her from Lord Hardyknute, who would be glad to speak to her in the library, if it were convenient for her to meet him there. It was quite convenient; and Mrs Knowles went thither—wondering, as she went, what his lordship could have to say that required a special interview. She, however, knew him by this time well enough to feel but little alarm at the summons.

"My dear madam," said he, on her entering, "I hope I have not disturbed you."

"By no means. I am quite at your lordship's service."

"As we are to lose you almost immediately, I knew that I should have no opportunity of speaking to you in private if I did not venture to solicit one. Will you be kind enough to sit for a minute or two?"

The widow began to think that something especially serious was to be communicated. She settled herself in a chair.

"You remember," went on Lord Hardyknute, "that you expressed some interest in the fortunes of Colonel du Lys of the Guards."

Mrs Knowles breathed more freely.

"When I was in town yesterday I thought of this, and endeavoured to obtain some information concerning him. The authorities, I regret to say, are frightened at the attitude of the public, and extremely angry with du Lys for having helped to bring about the disagreeable situation. It is utterly useless, in their present temper, to say a word about pardoning his offence. He has either been very headstrong and obstinate, or he has contrived to make them think him so; and either way, his friends can do nothing in mitigation of his punishment. But he has friends in plenty; and they will, I am sure, seize the first opportunity of advocating his cause."

“This is another kindness for which we are indebted to your lordship. I heard you say at breakfast that you had but a short time in town, and yet you could find time to make so many inquiries on our account. I am extremely obliged.”

“Not at all—not at all. And, by the way, I should tell you that du Lys has been rather unwell, and that he has left his relations for a time, and preceded them to the Austrian Tyrol. Expects to go on to Italy for the winter.”

When the lady understood that this was the communication which she had been summoned to hear, she made farther acknowledgments, and withdrew. The interview had filled the time to the hour of her departure. The carriage which was to take them home was announced before she rejoined her daughter, and she found Thyrza ready to descend. Lord Hardyknute and Miss Seward attended them to the entrance-steps. It was an open carriage in which they drove away, and the peer stood and watched Thyrza's feather as they passed down the avenue, and would not turn away as long as it could be distinguished.

They had not proceeded far when Mrs Knowles repeated to her daughter what she had heard from Lord Hardyknute concerning du Lys. Thyrza was much disturbed by being assured that du Lys's prospects were quite as bad as they had been represented,

and her indignation again rose. But she mastered it this time, and said, "Anger is of no use. I won't be provoked into saying anything hasty. It is a shameful affair." And then she fell a-musing. Before long, however, she spoke again. "How could Lord Hardyknute, mother, have made all these inquiries about Colonel du Lys, when he was so short a time in town, and had business of his own to attend to?"

"I don't know, but that occurred to me too; and I especially thanked him for having thought of our anxieties when he had so little time to dispose of."

"He will always think of any one's wants or anxieties; but the marvel to me is, how he could have asked so much concerning Colonel du Lys, and also attended to his own business on which he went up, when his stay was so very short."

Mrs Knowles really did not know how he managed it.

"He must have influence," proceeded Thyrza, "and when the time comes for moving on Colonel du Lys's behalf, I hope we shall be able to secure his good offices."

When they reached home, they found the elder Mr Darke there waiting for them, he having appointed to take on this day Mrs Knowles's decision on the matter which the mother and daughter had discussed in the library at Malmseymead. Mr Darke, it was sad to perceive, had not to-day his brisk, business-like man-

ner, and his look was as of one stricken in body or mind. He made no complaint, however : but when he was about to take leave, Mrs Knowles could not help saying that she feared he was not in his usual health ; and, on that hint, he by degrees unburdened his mind. He was not very well, it was true, but it was a family affliction which principally was causing him to look unlike himself. He had experienced a great shock, and his prospects had been, he might say, blighted. A man who had toiled hard through the best part of his life, who had brought up a family, and had preserved an unblemished name, could not experience such a reverse as he had described without showing some traces of it, although he was not one, he hoped, to give way too readily. So far Mr Darke revealed the sources of his grief, and then paused to be farther questioned. It was possible, Mrs Knowles thought, that he magnified the evil too much—that the clouds which appeared so dark might break yet and pass away. But no ; Mr Darke could not see how they ever could pass away. The blow had fallen. It had been a punishment, perhaps, on him, for having set his affections too unrestrainedly upon an object of fond pride. He had centred his hopes in one being whose natural endowments promised the highest success ; and now that being was, he might say, lost to him.

Thyrza, perceiving that the lamentation must refer

to Mr John Darke, asked whether that attractive youth was ill or otherwise in imminent peril, and was told in reply that it was no longer a peril but an accomplished ruin which had befallen him.

“Not to his life or health, surely?”

“To everything, my dear young lady. I discovered only a day or two ago that he has undone himself by a most insane marriage.”

“What! to Miss Fullerton?”

“Ah, you have heard of it, my dear; some officious person would be sure to carry it to *you*. But you must remember, as I do, that it’s a thing that can’t be mended — can’t be mended,” and poor Mr Darke heaved a piteous sigh. Thyrsa dared not say that she had not heard of the event before, lest she should be questioned as to how she had so readily named the lady. Presently Mr Darke went on—

“I had hoped very different things of him, I can assure you. With his talents, and his superior manners, and the easy, off-hand way in which he would deal with questions that would stagger even wise men, I felt sure of his rising to eminence. He is fit to associate with the most fashionable, knows all their terms, understands all their pursuits; and now, to think how he’s fastened a mill-stone about his neck,—hard to bear—hard to bear!”

Miss Fullerton, it seems, had known well how to

play her game. She had brought Mr John, in utter penitence and abasement, to her feet, soon after the date at which we last saw him at Beech Lodge. Whether the design of marrying immediately was Jessie's or Mr John's, is not known ; but certain it is that they did marry, and clandestinely—for Mr John, while ready to go any length to secure Jessie, had still such a terror of his governor, that he besought his bride to keep their marriage a secret for the present. This Jessie did, and she kept up appearances by continuing to give a gentle encouragement to young Minim. And so things went on for a few months.

At length came a time when both bride and bridegroom deemed it expedient to make their friends aware of the step which they had taken. The exciseman was very philosophical on the occasion, salved his conscience by a few observations on the baseness of deceit and underhand dealing, but on the whole did not display much indignation—reflecting, probably, that he had still good store of daughters whom it might be difficult to marry either with or without his approval. But with Mr Darke it was different. There was a stormy scene—a dreadful scene—between him and his son, the particulars of which did not transpire ; but Mr Darke, it is well known, gave his undutiful son to understand that he would afford him not the smallest assistance towards housekeeping, that he disowned

him altogether, and that he would make a new will and cut him off with a shilling. The exciseman, taking the part of a fellow-sufferer, made an attempt to reason a little with Mr Darke ; but he soon found that the time was not ripe for bringing the lawyer to what he called reason—that is, taking the whole charge of the young couple in life, and relieving him of all expense on account of his daughter Jessie.

Things were in this state at the time when Mr Darke announced the calamity at Beech Lodge. But these things adjust themselves generally in some way or other : and it may be well to state here, even though in doing so we run ahead of the main story, that Mr Darke relented after a time ; and, though he did not behave with excessive liberality, he set the young people going after a fashion. It is also pleasant to mention that matrimony seemed to greatly improve Mr John Darke, who was reduced to rather severe subjection by his wife, and who began to have an altogether new sense of the duties and business of life.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RUSTIC IN LONDON.

It was the advanced spring—let us say the summer—of 1856, and Thyrsa Knowles, under the wing of Lady Sarah Gard, had had a few weeks of London life in the season, and was experiencing considerable enjoyment, if she was not supremely happy. She was in good health and spirits; she made acquaintance with some new pleasure every day; she had been greatly and extensively admired. Her hostess and chaperon was most kind and considerate, desirous of amusing and informing her companion, and anxious at the same time that she should appear to advantage.

Thyrsa had been inside booths at Wyde fair, where she paid twopence for her entertainment, having been admitted at that rate as of the class of “working people and servants.” She had sat on back-seats, and seen tumbling and conjuring, with the feats of a sagacious and discriminating pony, which once pointed her

out to the refined audience as the young woman who lay in bed till nine o'clock thinking of a handsome scavenger's apprentice. She had seen a fat woman, and a male dwarf; and had heard the principal speeches in 'Hamlet' delivered by a stout gentleman, who, having prepared himself for the delivery by imbibing rum-and-water, pronounced most of his lines according to Hamlet's own rule, "trippingly on the tongue," went twice over a good many familiar passages without seeming to be aware that he did so, and forgot his lesson in the middle of the most telling recitations. Moreover, she had been once in a county town, and had heard the band of the Vert Rangers discoursing music which enchanted her. And if there be any other sights and wonders which Thyrza Knowles had seen or heard, they were all of the same class as those above enumerated.

It is certain that she had never accepted the idea that these exhibitions were of a very high class—indeed she had wondered much how her neighbours came to be so strongly attracted by any of them except the band. But finding herself to be one of a small minority, she had said but little of the unsatisfactory character of the shows. Howbeit, she had plenty of capacity for being amused, and would often question those who had travelled concerning the performances which they had seen, demanding particularly wherein town

entertainments differed from those of the country. It is believed that during her short acquaintance with Colonel du Lys she had besought that officer to describe to her some of the proceedings at the London theatres, and had ascertained that plays and operas were not necessarily exhibitions of buffoonery and street-songs. All this considered, it is easy to believe that her delight was greater than could be that of most young ladies of her age, who are generally more sophisticated than she was. Operas and oratorios were rather beyond her at first, but her ear and taste were becoming gradually trained. To enjoy the theatre she required no training, and her pleasure in the dramas was only too apparent. She wept audaciously ;

“ While her laugh, full of life, without any control

But the sweet one of gracefulness, rung from her soul.”

Well for her that she was a girl such as nobody was disposed to ridicule, or she would have furnished the foundation for capital little anecdotes, to be matured at the clubs, and to follow her in their completed state to every party at which she might make her appearance. She asked the Marquis of Grynne whether the opera (‘Don Giovanni’) ought to proceed through that tempest, and whether there was not great danger of the theatre being struck with lightning. Again, she remarked to Sir Riddel Chaffe, while the tears were still on her face, that it was a wonder

Madame Boucicault didn't catch her death from being immersed night after night as the Colleen Bawn. Little Cater, who was expected to bring down something good to the Mutton-chop Club every Wednesday, ventured to say that Miss Knowles understood the *Order of the Bath* to mean the recent regulation, of which people were talking much, which enjoined the provision of proper lavatories and other sanitary arrangements in all the barracks—whereby his audience did not seem to be at all amused. One man said, “She’s a deuced fine girl, anyhow;” while another observed that she was the sort of person who could say what she liked. And his failure to raise a laugh was not the worst of little Cater’s mortification; for one of his hearers happened to be Lord Hardyknute, who, not apt to be hard on anybody, did say, on this occasion, “Cater, my boy, what Miss Knowles said was, that some Engineer who has invented a convenient form of washing-places ought to get the *Order of the Bath*; the rest is sheer fiction, and of a vulgar sort. I’ve no doubt somebody told you the joke; but the lady in question has a good many friends about, and they won’t at all admire inventions intended to raise a laugh at her expense.”

Lady Sarah Gard was very kind in advising Thyrsa about these little matters. “All of us, my dear,” she said, “are affected by good acting; and there is nothing

to be ashamed of in showing that one thoroughly appreciates it. But it is the pleasure of the world to sneer at everything 'raw,' which is often simply another word for 'natural' or 'genuine.' So it is better to control one's emotions in public. And as for understanding how all these wonderful effects are produced, of course no one can do so without being very conversant with such matters. But it is better, when in company, to appear familiar with things of the sort. I would keep as collected as possible, and not ask any question or make any remark that can betray unacquaintance. Then, if you will ask me when we are at home, I will promise to inform you as well as I can, and not to be amused because you are more *naïve* than a *blasée* dowager."

Such hints were not thrown away. Thyrsa "held in;" recollections of her innocence and inexperience soon died away, while the presence of her charms was more and more felt every day.

Lady Sarah Gard occupied apartments in Jermyn Street. She had never owned a house in town since her husband's death, and seemed to have some objection to keeping one up. She knew, however, how to make her temporary dwelling as comfortable as possible in the London season. When first she went up, there was no lodger in that part of the house which she did not require; and it seemed that no one was likely to

take it. Nevertheless, it did happen that in the latter half of May another set of rooms was let to an officer of distinction only just returned from the Crimea—"an officer," the hostess said, "who had fought terrible, and had hardly a spot in him that hadn't been wounded, and who had slain innumerable Russians of all ranks with his own hands." He was a literary gent, too, she said, and was writing all the morning before he went out, and all the evening, and it might be the night too, after he came home, and so many large letters came for him. Lady Sarah's butler declared that his rooms smelt strongly of brandy; but, as he remarked, it was no wonder if a gentleman did take a little to ardent spirits in such a place as the Crimea was said to have been. And the butler might have remarked evidence of another creature-comfort to which the gallant officer—he was a colonel—was addicted. He consumed tobacco in large quantities; but having been advised that there were ladies on the floor above, he was careful to smoke only within his own billet and not to poison the passages. As he generally went down to his club in Pall Mall to breakfast somewhere between twelve and one, and did not return till about fourteen hours after, his tenancy was not likely to make the smallest difference to Lady Sarah Gard and her friend.

Thyrza Knowles would, it is thought, have liked to

walk or ride more than she did ; but as her hostess could not take either of these exercises, she was obliged to forego them, and to drive about in a luxurious carriage all day, and a good deal of the night. Lady Sarah had been anxious that the handsome figure and finished horsemanship of her charge should be seen in the Park, and had wished to make the arrangements necessary for that recreation ; but this Thyrza had positively refused to accede to, saying that she had had quite a surfeit of riding during the past twelve-month, and, unless her ladyship really desired that they should be apart for some hours of the day, she would much rather take her share of the amusements which the carriage could take them to. Whether she was really tired of riding or not, it was clear that she was not at all tired of the company of her friend—which thing the friend understood, and was charmed thereat.

Thyrza could not dance at all ; and this again made her an acceptable companion to Lady Sarah, who preferred to be able to go away from balls and parties at a reasonable hour. Dancing might be an amusement for another season, but for this year there was enough of novelty in town life to engage her attention without it. She had not dared to ask much concerning du Lys. Lord Hardyknute, she was sure, would have told her anything important that he might have heard of him.

She had just mentioned his name in presence of Lady Sarah Gard, who thereupon had taken up the subject warmly, saying, "Yes, Beauclerc du Lys, to be sure ; a relative and a very old friend. I am ashamed of myself for not having made inquiries about him before." Her ladyship did inquire, but without obtaining particular information. Du Lys was still abroad ; but where, was not exactly known. The last address given to his banker was somewhere in Switzerland. His brother was understood to be coming home soon, with the intention of returning to Italy for another winter, as the son was still very delicate and unfit to winter in England. Whether or not Colonel du Lys would accompany his brother, nobody seemed to know.

Now, though a good deal has been said about Thyrza Knowles's present position—and an attempt has been made to show her as she then was—yet, what many might consider the most important circumstance attending her has not been stated, and that for a good reason—namely, that it affected Thyrza herself very little. This circumstance was neither more nor less than that Thyrza, having admirers without end, had one lover who had been becoming for several months more and more open in the display of his feelings, and he was a peer of the realm. He was, moreover, a young man whose attentions were by no means to be despised by any one, and certainly not by a young

woman who had been a peasant on his estate two years ago. Of course Lord Hardyknute is the person meant. His lordship had during the winter, when he saw a good deal of Thyrza both in the field and in the hall, been becoming more and more impressed by this handsome, engaging girl. The dart which had been at length driven home, had entered before certain distinct blows of Cupid, of which his lordship was aware when they were delivered. It was planted by the first sight of Thyrza at Beech Lodge, dressed as a gentlewoman, even then well-mannered and occasionally queen-like. The barb held that way by the head for some time. Then, on the day when Thyrza became a little excited in his library, as has been narrated, the weapon was struck in a little deeper, and began to be troublesome. This second stage lasted until a little after Christmas, when, on a break-up of the long frost, dogs, horses, men, ay, and women too, came out one day in high spirits and panting for action. Two of the ladies in the field—that is to say, Miss Seward and Miss Knowles—were going to take only the most moderate gallop, and then to leave the chase to the sportsmen and the more determined sportswomen. Nobody's patience was long tried. A fox, which seemed to participate in the feeling of the morning, was not disposed to dally long under cover, and broke away full of vigour and defying his pursuers. There was a

glorious burst—everybody animated to the full. Thyrza, feeling as if she rode on air, was well to the front. Her excitement did not make her forget that hers was to be a limited pleasure, nor make her miscalculate how time fled and distance was covered. She would take one more fence and then fall out of the chase. The fence was cleared splendidly, and Thyrza drew her rein. But the horse, usually amenable to the slightest restraint, had just begun to enjoy himself, and positively objected to have his fun cut short. He tossed his head and snorted, but galloped on ; for the first time in his life he pulled a little—nothing more than a protest.

Then Thyrza, who would have sternly restricted herself, could not deny the poor beast his enjoyment. “Go then, my beauty,” said she, as she took the pressure off the rein ; and the animal answered the permission with a bound which testified to his delight, and was not the last bound by many which he made that morning. Thyrza’s weight was as nothing to his strong bone and muscle ; she sat close to him, and helped his ardour. Very soon everybody whose own condition permitted a cool glance round on the rest of the field was fascinated by the lady who was riding so straight and taking her fences so splendidly. Never in her life had Thyrza so revelled in crossing country. She now forgot time and distance, and everything but the

supreme pleasure of the chase. She did not know how long the ecstasy lasted, but she remembered coming to a stop at last in a grass field, where there were only four other riders—one the huntsman, and another Lord Hardyknute.

Poor Thyrza was unaware of anything remarkable having occurred, farther than that there had been a remarkably fine run, and that the pace had been rather trying. She perceived that Lord Hardyknute was looking at her fixedly: he never looked angry or unkind, but she fancied this silent regard must be his feeble attempt at sternness—so she lost no time in making her excuse. “I am very sorry, Lord Hardyknute,” said she. “I hardly know what to say. I did hold in for a while just on Grinlay Down; but the horse seemed to think I was mad to check him, and strove so that at last I let him go—only too willingly, I am afraid. Miss Seward, of course, has turned back. I don’t know where we are, but I must get home now.”

“Will you allow me to accompany you, Miss Knowles? I know the way,” said Lord Hardyknute, in a deferential tone.

“No, certainly; you will have some more sport yet, and I can get directed as I pass.”

“I am for no more hunting to-day,” answered he. “I shall go homeward, and I hope that I may be allowed to attend you.”

“If that is the case, I shall be only too glad of your escort.”

They moved away, misunderstanding each other much. Thyrza would have given the world to hear him say something in his usual kind, easy manner, that she might be sure he was not offended, and that her behaviour had not annoyed him. She could not understand the heightened respect with which he addressed her. Hardyknute, on his part, had been almost petrified at seeing Thyrza ride; and the entire ease of her manner after the feat had been achieved, the light in her eyes, and the glow on her cheeks, contributed to make up a picture such as he had not looked on before. He thought that her excellence as a horsewoman must be as well known to herself as it was now proved to the conviction of every one who had been afield to-day, and that to pay any petty compliment on a talent so well established would be an impertinence. Then, as he must not speak of what was uppermost in his mind, his conversation was not animated; indeed, Thyrza could not tell what to make of him, and parted from him with a vague terror that her offence was not condoned, and that she might hear more of it.

It was not until he called next day at the house, and at first saw Mrs Knowles alone, that he was able to unburden his mind and to give some idea of what he thought of yesterday's proceedings. He hardly

knew how to express his admiration. There could be no question any longer about his being annoyed. The truth was, that the arrow had penetrated much farther, and that his lordship was now in a very perilous way.

The sensation which Thyrza created in London quite completed the lover's subjugation. He no longer had a doubt about his own condition. He was desperately in love.

It need scarcely be stated that Lord Hardyknute's admiration was not unobserved. He was a person by no means likely to disguise his feelings—all was open as the day with him. Mrs Knowles, before Thyrza parted from her, had discerned something of the matter, and her maternal heart was lifted up, as well it might be; and yet, thought she, after all is told, Thyrza has some good blood in her veins. In fact, Mrs Knowles's own circulation was gradually feeling blue. She did not, however, hazard a remark on what was going on. Knowing, as she did, the tendency of Thyrza's fancy, she felt that a word out of season might spoil an affair to which she was not inimical. Lord Hardyknute in hand was worth two Colonels du Lys in the bush, and something heavy to boot.

Lady Sarah Gard's penetration was not long in discovering the direction in which Lord Hardyknute's affections tended. But he was a great favourite with her, and except to some common friends of him and

herself, she would not prate of his affairs. It was not her business, she thought, to direct his choice, and he must decide for himself how such an alliance would suit. For her own part, she would be delighted if he should propose to her *protégée*, and she had an intention of endowing Thyrza handsomely if the match should come off. Her ladyship was little given to rallying or joking; but she did, in speaking to Thyrza, let fall some very delicate allusions, which produced no rejoinder. "She is quite right," said her ladyship. "I admire the girl's reticence. When she is justified in speaking of the matter, I am sure I shall be her first confidant." But in reality there was no reticence on Thyrza's part. She had no idea that Lord Hardyknute was in love with her, having no wish to be father to the thought. He was her patron, her friend, her adviser; always kind, always ready to assist. Had he not come to see them in the cottage? had he not been the first to take them by the hand as soon as they were above the level of the peasantry? and if now he was pleased to show her attentions which she valued so much, was she to imagine that he was smitten with her charms. She knew that she was passable to look at, but she never had been vain or coquettish. She had a lively recollection of what she had been; she overrated her deficiencies; and thought herself an intruder into the fashionable world.

Another person has to be mentioned who saw—only too quickly saw and felt—the impression which Thyrza's charms had made. Miss Seward, from the day when she first saw Thyrza, had had an instinctive apprehension of her becoming a rival. A week's acquaintance had relieved her of the suspicion that Thyrza would ever actively plot against her peace; "but," thought Emma, "her unconsciousness and humility will be deadly influences if ever her charms shall strike in a region which it makes me heart-sick to think of as so stricken." For some time after her first visit to Beech Lodge, Emma's mind grew gradually calmer. Things seemed to be settling down into a comfortable condition, and very happy relations were established all round without any help or disturbance from the tiresome boy with the wings and dart. So far well; but when they had been leaving for town the previous year, Emma had not at all liked the persistency which Hardyknute displayed in furnishing Thyrza with a horse from his stables. She was not so easily talked over as Thyrza was. She knew that if he had chosen he could easily have found and bought a horse for her. That matter of the horse was always a care to Emma; and then there were certain other unfavourable symptoms—they need not be enumerated—which did not fail to strengthen her alarm.

Through this period, however, Emma had a rope to

cling to ; though whether it might be a trusty one or not, she could not tell. She quickly caught Thyrza's words about du Lys and his wound, and treasured them up. She saw very good reason for suspecting that Thyrza's affections were set upon somebody or other who was with the army in the Crimea. When the necklaces and things arrived, Emma perceived therein some dark evidence of a love affair, and was soothed thereby. But the signs were all unfavourable during the autumn of 1855. She saw Hardyknute becoming more and more attracted by her handsome friend. That day in the hunting-field had been like a dagger in her breast. Since that, every symptom had been adverse. And there was other evidence now, confirmatory of that of her own heart. That which was her fear, she heard spoken of by others as probable, or even as certain. To Hardyknute himself she dared not hazard an innuendo concerning Thyrza, lest she should hear from his own lips words that might destroy her last hope. She had in an indifferent tone asked her father whether he had observed her cousin's devotion to Miss Knowles ; and her father comforted her by replying that he must have been very blind if he hadn't. Then poor Emma asked whether Sir Eldred thought it would be a judicious match, and the answer was, " Well, I really haven't thought ; I didn't know whether he was serious."

“Serious!” echoed Emma, with rather unusual vehemence. “Do you suppose that *he* would ever trifle with a woman’s affections?” Then, after a moment, she added, speaking as much to her own heart as to her father, for the idea did but then occur: “If he seems to hesitate, it is only because he is doubtful of having interested her. Nobody, I think, has ever remarked that she was very deeply enamoured.”

“No, perhaps not,” said her father, in an indifferent tone. “I daresay that’s it.”

Well, things were getting desperate with her in London. Emma was really ill. Her troubled and doubting mind, unrelieved by counsel or sympathy, was wearing her body—feeding on her damask cheek in good earnest, and without any figure of speech. In sooth, fair Emma (Emma was passing fair) looked lean and wan, insomuch that ill-natured people began to reckon up the summers that had passed since she was introduced, and to hint that the bloom might be expected to leave her now. She lay awake at night, unable to escape from her trouble, and pressing her soft pillow in vain. She thought she must become very ill and die, unless an end were put to her rack-ing suspense. She cast about in all directions for some possible reassurance or help, but in vain. Lady Sarah Gard might help her; yes, but with what face could she interrogate Lady Sarah on the subject?

Would not that shrewd lady at once detect her weakness, and learn the precious secret? No, she could not face Lady Sarah.

It was not until after many fruitless ruminations that the idea occurred to her, "After all, why not try Thyrsa herself? She is a true woman; far more honourable than many that have been reared in palaces. Thyrsa admires me, and is my fast friend."

Yes, that was the best course. The more she pondered it, the more eligible it seemed. She wondered at last why she had not thought of it before. This conclusion was so satisfactory that poor Emma slept.

Lady Sarah Gard never rose early, and Miss Thyrsa Knowles always did so. "Miss Seward!" exclaimed Thyrsa one morning, in echo to the announcement made by the waiting-woman. "Say I will be with her immediately."

"My dear Emma," said Thyrsa, hastening in, "there is nothing the matter, I hope? You don't generally pay visits so early."

"I owe you an apology for disturbing you so early; but I know that you are always astir before this hour."

"Certainly, my dear; and there is no disturbance, and no need of an apology. If your early visit means nothing unpleasant to yourself, it is only a delight to me. It is all so quiet (isn't it?) at this time, and we can talk as freely as if we were in the country."

“Well, it is to talk freely that I have come, Thyrza ; but I want to be very, very confidential.”

“Very well ; my own chamber has been swept and garnished since I rose. Let us go in.” And the two girls were speedily closeted, sitting together on a sofa.

“Now, Thyrza, I must say quickly what I have to say, or my courage will fail.”

“Yes, Emma ; go on.”

“Well, Thyrza, I implore you to tell me—strictly in confidence between us two, my dear—if you care one straw for me, I entreat you to tell me—Do you—do you—love Lord Hardyknute?”

“Love Lord Hardyknute ! I !” exclaimed Thyrza, with surprise (a few months ago she would undoubtedly have said “Me !” but she had worked hard to get rid of petty vulgarisms). “I respect Lord Hardyknute, I admire him, I—I—I—well, I think I *do* love him.”

“Thyrza, dear, for pity’s sake speak plainly—not what you think but what you feel. Tell me in a word—I pledge myself to secrecy—will you marry Hardyknute when he asks you ?”

“Marry him, Emma ! Why, what makes you ask such a question ? When I said I thought I loved him, I was not thinking of the kind of love which leads to marriage. Why, I feel towards him as if he were some

near relation : I would say a brother, if it did not sound presumptuous."

"But if he should ask you, will you say Yes?"

"Nonsense, Emma! he will never ask me."

"One question more, Thyrza; answer like a kind girl. Is there any one else—I ask no name—is there any one else to whom you would answer Yes if he asked you the same question?"

A moment's pause, and then Thyrza said decidedly, "There is."

"My dear girl," said Emma, laying her face on Thyrza's shoulder, and melting into tears, "bless you, bless you for your candour!"

Thyrza, though much puzzled about all this, proceeded to soothe her friend before she sought an explanation. Emma was out of condition; her nerves were unstrung; she was a long time in regaining the mastery over her feelings. But Thyrza was tender and womanly, and she coaxed Emma into a firmer state at last. They were locked together—Emma leaning on Thyrza. "Something has troubled you greatly, dear Emma. You will tell me what it is?"

"Yes, I will tell you now," answered Emma. Then turning her countenance toward the back of the sofa, she continued, "I could not bear that you or any one else should marry Hardyknute. It would kill me!"

"Oh, gracious!" exclaimed Thyrza, comprehending

the case. She had never received such a confidence before, and was both astonished and pleased. "Dear Emma, I hope you will be happy, as you deserve to be. I would not distress you for the world, believe me, even if I had the opportunity, which I never shall. Come, will you lift your face and smile? Look up, dear Emma; do."

A little more soft entreaty, and Emma raised her face. They parted that morning dearly attached friends. Thyrza was quite exalted by being made the depositary of a secret such as is most congenial to a female breast; and Emma—oh, as to Emma, she went her way feeling like one who has been reprieved from death, walking the earth as if she trod on air.

We thus see how fate was dealing with Thyrza Knowles and the circle of friends immediately around her; but in order to an exact understanding of the situation as it then was, it will be necessary to turn to other persons who had some influence on the outfall of this history.

CHAPTER XIII.

OLD ACQUAINTANCES MEET IN TOWN.

COLONEL DU LYS was once more in London. His health was restored, and many of his sentiments had undergone a considerable change. One effect of the change was, that he did not at once betake himself to the Guards' Club, where he fancied the tone might be not quite in harmony with his altered feelings, but went to take a quiet and solitary dinner at another military club, where Guardsmen were not often to be seen. He had a good many things to think seriously about, and somehow he desired to be a little among some men who took a view of the service which was not the Guards' view. His brother and family had gone to a hotel in Jermyn Street, where he also had taken rooms; but as the party were all more or less tired, he thought his relatives would prefer to be left to themselves this evening, and, for his part, he rather yearned to be in a club again.

He entered the coffee-room, and saw, as he did so, a placard facing him, with the intelligence that from seven o'clock to half-past nine a French dinner could be served *tout compris* for a fixed sum. "No," said he, as he turned away, "I've had enough of foreign dinners. My greatest treat will be to go in for an honest joint"—and so he arranged it, all the dishes that he selected being as English as possible. He had not arrived very early in the day, and so was soon seated at his little dinner-table. "By Jove," said he, "we're a discontented lot, ready to cry up anything and everything except what is our own! And yet where can a man go to be better provided with a dinner than here? Soup that has been made from meat; the freshest of fish simply cooked, not smothered in strong sauce to conceal its staleness; mutton or beef which cannot be equalled in any other land; poultry which is plump and tender."

As the meal proceeded and these thoughts had way, he took frequent surveys of the coffee-room. There were fellows of many sorts there,—many youngsters who had had their rawness lately taken off by the smell of powder; men in the prime of manhood—some maimed and scarred, some losing the military characteristics under the influence of continued half-pay, or through having *sold*, and taken to civil life; grim veterans—some lately come from work,

others looking as if they had not worked for many a year, and as if they would work no more. Some were, like himself, eating apart and in silence; but the greater number were in groups. Here one or two youngsters, probably fresh from the wars, were at table with an old father or uncle, who was at one time listening eagerly to their adventures, and at another showing them how fields were won under the Duke, not wishing apparently to lessen their pride in the achievement of yesterday, but evidently thinking that the real glories of war had gone out with the old erratic musket and the black gaiters. In every way the elder was entering into the humour of the entertainment, throwing off his glasses of champagne and waxing loquacious. Again, there was a trio of merry fellows who clearly had known each other on service, but were now meeting for the first time since they parted in the field: what a quantity they had to say, and how loudly they talked over incidents of the campaign worthy and unworthy of note! A couple of old captains, whose luck had tied them to America while other men were winning laurels and promotion in the East, sat talking in a low tone, while they eyed with envy and affected contempt a batch of brevet officers, their juniors in age and regimental rank. And the several parties of old boys, who were thinking but little of glory, only of how best to kill their monoton-

ous leisure, were worth observing as they chuckled over their broad jokes, and swallowed with much deliberation, so as not to lose the flavour of a drop, wine from some bins whose merits were pretty nearly all that they had learnt in the last twenty years. Some were leaving after an early meal—some were coming late, intending to finish the evening in that room. There were two or three men there whose names would remain on the page of history after they had ceased to eat dinners. In old days Beauclerc du Lys would have regarded superciliously such an assemblage ; but somehow there was more heart in him now, and he could look with interest on the figures and groups.

His seat happened to be near the entrance-door ; and while he surveyed the scene, there entered a rather tall but not very erect man, who with an infirm gait hobbled up to the large tables on which were set out the various joints and preparations from which the assembly was being fed. He eyed carefully dish after dish, as if rather hesitating as to which he would eat of, but his affection did not fasten on any. Then he spoke to a waiter. His head was now turned from the meats, and he seemed to note the individuals who made up the company, as if seeking out some acquaintances. Presently the waiter to whom he had spoken tendered him a glass of what looked very like brandy. This he drank off, and immediately hobbled out. Du Lys did

not see his countenance very distinctly, but he was amused at his proceedings. He thought it a pity that the person whom he had seen—probably some pampered, gouty ruin—had not been indulged with a little Crimean fare. After a few months of that, he would have found it less difficult to get up an appetite.

Du Lys sipped his sherry: decent sherry had become a novelty to him after his wanderings. The English meal, the generous wine, and the varied company had warmed his heart, and brought him to a state of pensive tranquillity. Past pleasures, past dangers, began to rise from his memory, and with much contentment he sat and mused. His eye rested lazily and without much speculation on the painting and furnishing of the room; he scanned the pictures, most of them portraits of distinguished warriors, but not all: there were a few compositions between—among these was a lady on horseback, and the horse was grey. In a moment he had called up the figure of the girl Knowles on his saddle, putting the little horse into a canter, and the animal starting with the left leg. He would be going soon again into the Vert district, and he would see his old flame. Poor Thyrsa! had she kept the locket? had any one ever let her have a ride on horseback since? Would she know him? he was a good deal altered. Would they ever again——

Hollo! by Jove, there was the same old *ennuyé*

hobbling once more to the tables and trying to excite his appetite, as before. Again he scrutinises the viands without fancying any. He acts over again the part of his former visit, to the summoning of the waiter, the noting of the company, the imbibing of the brandy, and the immediate retreat. "Curious fellow," said du Lys to himself; then aloud, "Waiter!" "Did you call, sir?" "Yes: tell me who that gentleman was who came a few minutes ago into the room, stood awhile over by that pillar, and then went out again. Doesn't walk very firmly." "That, sir? oh, that was Colonel Warner. He'll be in again before long." "Thank you."

He determined to ask about this old character, feeling certain that there must be a history of some sort, long or short, attached to him. His reverie was broken now: he did not care to stay longer; so he lounged up to the steward's desk and asked for his bill. While he was paying it the old apparition shuffled by again and went through his routine; but this time, while he was waiting for his brandy, du Lys got sight of his face.

"Wiggy Warner, by all that's astonishing!"

Du Lys lowered his head over the desk, and was very busy in counting his change, while through his mind ran rapidly the following considerations—

"Confounded old sinner! if half of what Henniker said of him is true, he isn't fit to speak to. But how can one tell that Henniker wasn't misinformed?

Wiggy seems to keep his footing here in a respectable club, at any rate. Others who probably know him better than I do bear with him; then why should I be the one to fight shy of him? He isn't a particularly estimable person, I am sure; but he is a character, which is often a good covering for sins. Besides which, he was deuced civil and considerate to me and all the seedy fellows, so I shall go and speak to the old boy."

This kind of reflections had passed through hundreds of other minds, and was indeed the capital on which Wiggy Warner's social position, such as it was, was based. His transgressions were against his profession, and against his own conscience and honour. Individuals found him benevolent and accommodating—sometimes excessively so. No one had a personal complaint against him, and nobody chose to throw the first stone.

"How d'ye do? glad to see you again on English soil."

The old villain looked hazily and bowed, as if careful not to compromise himself by being too ready to resume a chance acquaintance. Du Lys was simply amused. "Been long at home?" said he.

"I landed about six weeks ago," answered Wiggy. "Let me see; we met at—Malta, was it?"

"No, on the Bosphorus."

"Ah yes. You'll excuse me, I hope; but there were so many coming and going, that I get confused."

"I have to congratulate you, I hope, on promotion ; the servant said you were Colonel Warner."

"Yes, they have recognised my services so far as to promote me ; but that is little enough."

"You want something substantial?"

"I want at least a decent appointment. After going to Varna with the first draft, and staying and seeing the whole thing through, besides having performed very responsible duties requiring tact as well as judgment, I hope not to be set adrift as an unattached lieutenant-colonel. Are you just back? haven't met you here before."

"Just back from the Continent. I left the Crimea a year ago. I also am on half-pay at present." (Du Lys thought that this would prevent a reference to his former regiment.)

"I thought you Engineers were never on half-pay except from illness."

"I am not an Engineer ; but I have been very ill."

"No ! isn't your name Travers?"

"My name is du Lys."

"Ah, of the Guards, was it not?"

It was impossible to judge whether Wiggy wanted to be very dignified, or whether he really was confused by the number of his wards. An old gentleman so fond of brandy might certainly not have the clearest memory of either persons or events ; and yet his next

remark did not show confusion of ideas; but then Wiggy was always great at the Army List and gazettes.

"Remember seeing you put on half-pay. You were succeeded by Milacre; Heavyrent became lieutenant and captain, and Purchas got his first commission. Gazette of 2d July 1855."

"Damn your memory," thought du Lys. *Said du Lys*, "Well, and I've been moving about the Continent since. And so they have promoted you?"

"Yes. Obligated to concede it after a long correspondence; but the thing wasn't done graciously at all. I've got some little idea of how to work them by this time, fortunately."

"Well, I congratulate you, I'm sure. But I keep you from your dinner, probably."

"Not at all. I haven't ordered any dinner yet, and I don't think I shall. In another hour I can make it supper; and then have something devilled. The fact is," added Wiggy, confidentially, "the cookery here is enough to destroy any appetite in the world, more especially when one has been used to a foreign *cuisine*. Perhaps *you* have some business or engagement from which I detain you."

"I have got a letter or two to write, but I'm not going to leave the club just now."

"If you'd like to know how I worked those fellows

at the Horse Guards, come into the smoking-room when you've done writing," said Wiggy, who had been waxing cordial as the conversation proceeded.

Du Lys nodded, and withdrew. "Well, I'll be hanged!" said he to himself, as he went smiling along the passage. There was something infinitely ludicrous in Wiggy's case. The idea of *his* going and *forcing* the authorities to give him something—*his* who was notoriously retained in the service on sufferance, and thought to be extremely lucky in the toleration. His services! his claims! his expectation of a lucrative appointment! By George! what next? And the old reprobate as pompous and earnest as if the whole thing were genuine! Making every allowance for *amour propre*, was it even possible that he could think himself in the slightest degree meritorious? All the scoundrels whom Shakespeare sends to France with the army of Agincourt know themselves to be rogues, however much they may affect a different character to impose on others.

And then Colonel Warner's wonderful person. He had clearly been in dock since he came back, and had had a plank or two let into him. One of his cheeks looked rather newer than the other, and the gloss of the workshop was hardly off his right ear. It was nothing to be remarked that after a long absence from home he had had his teeth touched up, or that the

glory of his wig had been intensified in the highest degree. Perhaps there had not been time yet to do anything to his old pins, but his gait was certainly more shaky than of yore—at that time of night at least—and he had a stoop to which perhaps his artist would give attention some day soon.

Du Lys entered the smoking-room after he had written his letters, saw a comfortable seat, and sat himself down thereon. The atmosphere was very thick, as it usually was at this hour of the night ; but after a while figures were discernible through the fog. As he peered around he caught sight of Colonel Warner reclining on one side of a little round table, on the other side of which sate a little old man, wonderfully shrivelled, with a sharp nose, and about fifteen long hairs combed over his pate. After a while Wiggy, with the aid of his glass, distinguished du Lys, and leaned over the table and made some remark to the withered elder his *vis-à-vis*, pointing out, as du Lys pleasantly imagined, “that man in the Guards who got into a mess and was put on half-pay.” Presently the two separated, Wiggy scrambling to his feet, and his friend, after one or two false starts with his hands on the arms of his chair, at last getting his weight over his shrunk shanks, and assuming a position as near to the erect one as he was ever likely to take in this life. The old anatomy retired, holding on by the

tables as he went, and then Colonel Warner came and sate himself beside du Lys. "You have had your supper, I hope," said the latter.

"Yes, I got down something infernally well peppered; this English cookery is really too disgusting. Can't stand it at all. I must get a glass of brandy, by the way, at once. The very thought of the dishes upsets one."

"Fortunately, I've been so long on foreign diet, that it's rather a relief to get simple English fare again."

"I know we don't all think alike on the subject. A friend of mine who is here pretty nearly every night, always dines off the joint, and says he doesn't tire of it. Often helped three or four times. Fine appetite."

"You don't mean, I suppose, the friend I saw you talking to over there a little while ago," said du Lys, ironically.

"Over there?—yes, I do; that's the very man. Wonderful fellow he is too, I can tell you."

"Shouldn't have thought it."

"That fellow—mind, he's an old man—can, as I told you, make his hole in a joint of meat, and finish his bottle of port after. He'll walk for hours (*walks me down*), and will sit up all night when there's any fun going." Then, lowering his voice, the colonel made a farther communication touching his friend's state of preservation, which, du Lys thought, might be a curi-

osity in dynamics, but not a matter of consequence. "Most remarkable man," concluded the colonel, "and completely gives the lie to all the stuff they talk about regular living and so on. Been a free liver all his life, and look at him!"

"Just what I should have supposed."

"Would you, though? Most people imagine that he must have lived by rule and denied himself: not a bit of it. I'll tell you what I believe to have been the real secret. He never married."

"Dear me! that is worth noting."

"Remember, I've tried both ways of living myself; and, believe me, I think a bachelor's life far more conducive to health and development than the domestic. I have not the least doubt that if I had stuck to married life I shouldn't have been the man I am."

"The four C's, to wit," thought du Lys.

"And you hope now to get employment, colonel?"

"I certainly ought to get it. But I'll tell you now about those fellows at the Horse Guards; perhaps you may take a hint from my management if ever you find them inclined to ignore you claims."

"Thank you."

"You see, as soon as I arrived I went down and saw Sloper. He was civil enough at first—said he was glad to see me back safe, and he fancied I had made a good thing of it. I of course looked rather stiff at

this, and remarked to him that if he had been campaigning for over two years in an abominable climate, and had had literally no recognition of his services, he probably wouldn't have thought it a good thing. 'At any rate,' said he, 'you got a snug berth, out of the way of danger.' 'I am surprised,' I said, 'to hear an officer talk in that way. Nothing but inexperience of active service' (I kept on him there) 'could have permitted you to make such a remark.' I reminded him that I went to Varna with my regiment, and was disposable for any duties of the campaign. It was my misfortune that the Commander-in-chief thought proper to employ me in a service requiring special qualifications and incessant attention."

"Bravo, colonel! and then?"

"Then Sloper could say no more, except that he didn't think there would be more promotions. To which I replied that I presumed that must depend upon what claims might be put forward by officers who had not yet had an opportunity of being heard. 'Have you seen Smoother?' he asked. 'Not yet.' 'Then you'd better speak to him, you know.' Well, it was pretty near the same with Smoother. He too had the impudence to tell me I was a devilish lucky fellow, and ought to remember how considerate they'd been in finding a berth for me at all; and we went through very much the same argument as I'd had with Sloper.

At last Smoother asked if I'd seen Buffer, as, after all, it was no use arguing the matter until it was known what Buffer thought. Buffer referred me to Snapper, and Snapper to Drawle. Drawle sent me on to Blarney, and that was all that could be done that day."

"Didn't look hopeful."

"No, indeed; but I didn't let 'em rest. I was down again by ten next morning, and caught Sloper as he went in, so he couldn't help seeing me. By Jove, sir, if I ever was sure of anything in my life, I am certain that these villains had been consulting upon my case over-night, and devising excuses for refusing me my hardly-earned reward! They had all changed their note now. 'You see,' says Sloper, 'it's no use to open the question, unless the general officer under whom you and the other Staff officers of invalids were serving should bring the matter forward in a favourable report.' Now you know, my dear fellow, how little the general officer had to say to me, and what a farce it was to bring him into the business at all. However, this was their song to-day, as I was passed on from one to the other. Blarney ended with, 'You'd better see the general,' and there was the end of another day's work."

"But this didn't discourage you?"

"Not a bit. I inquired for the general at his club,

but found he was in the country. The very thing, I thought. I'll run down and call on him while he's off his stilts. No high horse in the country; no official reserve; no bowing out. He was staying at Wrilford, not in his own house; but that was no matter. I dropt down and asked for him; found him talking to the noble host, who was civil and asked me to come in to lunch after the interview. Well, the general was very good-natured, and all that. 'Weren't you included among those recommended?' asked he. I told him I was afraid not, or I should not now be troubling him. 'You are quite sure?' asked he again. 'You have examined the report?' Of course I hadn't seen it, but I wasn't going to be put off on that score. I said we must take for granted that I wasn't mentioned. He said that was unfortunate. I agreed; but I added that it was a misfortune which might be assuaged if he would supply the omission now. This he couldn't think of. He didn't think he could presume to make another report unless called upon to do so. Impossible to make me the subject of a special letter; said he was very sorry. It was plain that he couldn't be got to move just now: and so I changed my tactics, and asked whether, if he were referred to, he would give me a lift; and he said he would, as far as he conscientiously could. I was obliged to be content with this."

“And of course you stayed to lunch?”

“Stayed to lunch, yes: nothing eatable; the very best people have coarse tables nowadays. Two glasses of superb brandy and a very fair cigar, I acknowledge. But still the lunch was not without its uses. His lordship happened to say he hoped our military business had been satisfactorily settled, and I took up the answer and said I was afraid not—that I had come to complain to the general, as my former chief, of my services having been overlooked, and I was afraid I should have to bring my case before Parliament, where I hoped to have his support. His lordship said he should be only too delighted to have an opportunity of doing right to any of our neglected heroes—handsome, wasn’t it?”

“I think it was.”

“Well, then, I rattled back to town, and began once more to try to bring my friends Sloper and the others to reason. I showed them that the general couldn’t make the first move in the matter, but that he would give me a lift if referred to. But how were they to refer? Sloper asked. I’d better see Smoother, he said. I answered that I would see Smoother, and see him a hundred times if that would do good; but before I went, it would be as well to ask whether, if I wrote officially, stating that my duties had detained me from home rather after the rest, and asking for some re-

cognition of my services, he, Sloper, would refer the application to the general for report. Sloper couldn't tell, really. I'd better ask Smoother. But eventually, after being an hour in his office, I got him to say he didn't see that any harm need ensue if that were done. And in a couple of days I had an admission from Smoother and the others to the same effect. Thereupon I wrote my letter. Heard nothing for three days. Found on inquiry it had been cushioned. Traced it to Snapper. Went to Snapper, who at length acknowledged having the letter, but said he couldn't dispose of it without special instructions, which he hadn't had time to obtain. I needn't detail all the trouble I had. Suffice it to say, that after a very hard fight, I got the reference made. General said at once he had heard no complaint (how could he?) of the manner in which my duties were performed."

"Well, by Jove, you had a hard fight!"

"But stop; you haven't heard the whole of it yet. The thing hung fire again. Cost me as much trouble and labour to get at the stoppage as all the previous steps together had cost. Correspondence was 'going through the office,' they all said, but I couldn't for a very long time get upon its line of motion. At last I put unearthly pressure upon Buffer, who was understood to have the matter in hand, and to be charged

with keeping the trouble of the business off the more sublime authorities. So upon Buffer I put the screw, and, after a great deal of fencing, he confessed, 'Well, I'm afraid your application won't succeed. The higher authorities don't consider the general's recommendation very strong, and they don't wish to make any more promotions—think enough has been done.' I was furious, as you may suppose. After old Pan's favouritism of his nephew, and the hundred cases of undeserved promotion of which we both knew, this stuff about the general's recommendation not being strong enough, was perfectly disgusting. So I told Buffer. I also asked what the deuce I was to do to set the matter going again. 'Well, I really don't know,' said he. 'Thing seems all up; unless,' he added, after a pause, 'you think it would be of any use to attend a levee and state your own case.' Excuse me one moment while I tell the waiter to bring a glass of brandy."

The brandy was ordered and brought. Colonel Warner lit a fresh weed, and proceeded with the account of his unheard-of trials.

"I never let it be said that I lose what is my due by refusing to take any trouble that may be required. I said I would attend a levee, and I did. Stated my case concisely, but firmly. Got an equivocal answer, of course. I had now done all that I could personally

achieve, but the matter was ripe for the operation of other influences. I had made the acquaintance of several men belonging to the press, as they went up and down between Sebastopol and the West. And I thought I would just see whether a plain statement of my cruel case, and a little reference to some monstrous iniquities which the public haven't forgotten, might not shame my unjust friends a little. Accordingly, one of the military papers expressed a fear that it might be necessary to expose a cruel wrong that was being perpetrated; also, that, as contrasted with the refusal of common justice to a gallant officer who would not pursue his object by fawning or the use of undue influence, it might be well to consider the huge rewards that had been bestowed on men of very questionable merit. I have reason to think this had an immense effect. War Office was first to take alarm, because it has to stand all the baitings in Parliament. It called Horse Guards' attention to the paragraph, and hoped they were not going to bring on a row."

"Ah!" said du Lys, "they do live in dread of that infernal press, as I've reason to know. Well, you interest me much. Did the move succeed?"

"It was one element of success. But, you see, I didn't trust to a single screw. You know Krimcon of the Staff, formerly in the Eleventeenth? Well, he's a particular friend of mine."

Du Lys had great difficulty in restraining an ejaculation, but he did restrain it. Krimcon was the man named by Henniker as having (for one) destroyed Wiggy Warner's domestic peace, and the man of whom Wiggy was accused of having borrowed a ten-pound note.

"Krimcon," continued Colonel Warner, "has lately married the daughter of the Gammoner-General—deuced pretty girl!—and he promised to lay it on to his father-in-law in my behalf, and, I doubt not, did so. Here were two strong attacks; but the strongest of all I can't be so explicit about—mouth sealed. I will only hint that the sex has always been my weakness, and I am not the only man in the army who has a weakness the same way. Recollect that fellow in Shakespeare, don't you? who said, 'If you hadn't ploughed with my heifer,' and so on. *Verbum sat*. As a rule, would never turn an affair of the heart to account that way, except in the direst necessity and under the foulest provocation. But there are circumstances which justify the use of even one's personal advantages."

"It can't be said that you left any stone unturned," remarked du Lys. "These forces acting together must pretty nearly have carried your point."

Colonel Warner smiled a complacent and assenting smile. "Yes," said he. "We are getting near the

dénouement now. I went again to Buffer to tell him of my having been at the levee, and to ask if the application was moving in its groove yet. Instead of wanting to fence and be mysterious as usual, he was quite ready to meet me. He really smiled, and appeared even candid. 'Go to Drawle,' said he. 'He's got something to tell you.' So I went to Drawle. 'Ah, I wanted to see you,' said Drawle. 'Happy—ah—to tell you—ah—that—ah—I think—ah—you'll most likely get—ah—promotion soon.' 'At last?' said I. 'It's taken a lot of doing.' 'Ah—it wouldn't have been—ah—so long,' answered Drawle, 'if it had been allowed—ah—to take—ah—its proper course. But—ah—some officious—ah—fellow connected with the press was thought—ah—to be meddling—ah—and of course—ah—the authorities—ah—were not going to stand—ah—dictation of—ah—any kind. So they—ah—waited until all pressure of—ah—that kind was—ah—taken off. You were—ah—devilish near losing it—ah—altogether.' 'Never mind,' said I, 'if it's safe now.' The truth was, the next number of the military paper of which I have spoken was to come out in two days, and would have contained a slasher if I hadn't passed the word that all was right. Tuesday after, I was gazetted a lieutenant-colonel."

"Quite a 'Pilgrim's Progress,'" remarked du Lys

upon the narrative. "You deserved to get something at last."

"If it cost all that labour to procure a mere act of justice, what will it cost to obtain anything in the way of favour or reward? However, I shan't despair. The press is working for me already; and many of them, I fancy, know that I'm moving. Don't forget what I've been telling you if you happen to want anything yourself. With a strong case, perseverance will generally be successful. And if you have an opportunity ever or anywhere of throwing in a word for me, don't fail to use it. You were an eye-witness of what I had to go through."

"Of one chapter of your labours."

"I assure you the strain never relaxed. Up to the sailing of the last transport for England I was at it just as hard as when you were with us."

"Well, very many thanks for the relation of all this. I hope soon to congratulate you on an appointment. By Jove, it's late for me! I learned to keep early hours while I was abroad and after I had been ill. You are not ready for bed yet, I suppose?"

"H'm; let me see. Just after one. I did intend to keep an engagement; but I doubt now if I shall. Some idea that I'll go home and proceed with a memorandum of services that I'm drawing up for those

rogues at the Horse Guards. I walk towards Jermyn Street. Which way do you go?"

"Why, that's my way too."

"The deuce! Then wait one moment while I get a glass of brandy, and I'll accompany you."

Colonel Warner rose from his seat with some difficulty, and tottered grievously for a few steps, after which he fell into his usual hobble. Then he was encased in his wrapper, had his hat and umbrella handed by a waiter, and signified that he was ready to proceed. Du Lys offered him his arm, which Wiggy took, and they went off quite in the old Eastern style. Slowly and gently down the steps, then away along Pall Mall, and across St James's Square.

"Mild night," remarked Wiggy. "Broiling hot day to-morrow, I suppose. By the by, I see an old friend of yours, if I may call him so, appointed to a good place on the Staff in India."

"Indeed! a friend of mine?"

"Well, I suppose I must hardly call him a friend. Don't know whether you'll allow me to mention his name. I mean the old Scotchman, Mackechnie, you know; disagreeable, stiff-necked old fellow, I fancy: never met him."

"I not only can bear to hear his name," answered du Lys, "but I can assure you of my extreme satisfaction

at hearing of his appointment. I saw a good deal of Mackechnie on the Continent, after he was wounded, and believe that a better or a braver soldier, or a more thoroughly conscientious man, does not exist."

"H'm," answered Wiggy, "I quite agree that it is great folly fostering animosities." Then he was silent for a minute, considering what on earth du Lys could possibly expect to get out of Mackechnie that he should have condoned that veteran's offences. But immediately returning from speculation to business, he added, "Since you are on good terms, would you mind saying to him, if you see him, that I don't object to going to India? He'll have one or two deputies, and may perhaps be allowed to name one."

"I will tell him what you say, certainly, if I see him; but I cannot undertake to ask anything of him."

"Thanks; it will give him a good idea," said Wiggy. "Believe lots of fellows are left in the cold because men who are looking about for smart hands don't know they're available."

It wasn't far to Jermyn Street, and by the time that Colonel Warner had delivered himself as above, they had reached his door.

"This is my domicile," said he; "come quietly up the steps, because there are ladies above who may perhaps have gone to bed. Where the devil is my key?"

Ah, this is it. Good night now. Where do you hang out?"

"Only a little way down on the other side; at the Ipswich. Good night."

Du Lys went his way; and Colonel Warner, having entered the house, proceeded to light his candle at the gas-jet, and then, feeling the wall, to make his way to his apartment, which was on the ground-floor. Opposite his door, and against the stairs, stood an object which somewhat embarrassed him. It would not have embarrassed most men, because it left plenty of room to pass; but Colonel Warner generally required a great deal of sea-room, and to-night more than usual, for as he had talked so much he had required an extra glass or two of brandy. He stumbled against the obstacle and then against his own door, displacing the mat and making something of a clatter. "Damn it," said he, "they won't give a man a chance of being quiet. Why on earth do they put such a thing as that in the way? What the devil is it?" And he held by the balusters to examine it. It was a wicker-case covered with oil-cloth, such as is used for the transport of ladies' dresses, and it probably had been sent home late. He was mollified directly. He piqued himself upon his gallantry. "Oh, some woman's nonsense," muttered he; "wouldn't have stood it if it had been anything else."

Thereupon he entered his apartment, drew down a gas-lamp, and lighted two burners, which showed him to be in his sitting-room—a small retreat where he smoked and wrote. In front of this, and looking into the street, was his bedroom, which was more spacious. In the sitting-room were several tin boxes, and two of them, being open, were seen to contain papers; also one or two cigar-boxes, and a spirit-case. There was a battered uniform-case against the wall, and a very aged portmanteau.

The Colonel divested himself of his wrapper and hung it behind the door, put his hat on a side-table, and then retired into his bedroom, whence he speedily returned attired in his dressing-gown (a garment that had seen service), and a smoking-cap not fresh. It was contrary to his principles to go to bed before three or four o'clock; and so, although he felt a little heavy, he resolved to do something towards the preparation of various representations which he intended to aid him in his pursuit of lucrative employment. He lifted a tin case to get out certain documents; and the case being unlocked, the cover came up alone first, then the box followed with a jerk and hung by the hinges, the whole of the contents falling out and being strewed upon the floor. This did not, however, much incommode him, as he was going to seat himself on a low easy-chair, which enabled

him to reach them quite easily. He put by him a little desk, which he could rest on his knee and write on when he found it necessary to make a note: he also arranged on his other hand a bottle of brandy and a small glass, which he extracted from the spirit-case, and put his candle handy, so that he might get a light. All being thus ready, he lowered himself cautiously into his chair, put on a pair of powerful spectacles, lit a weed, and commenced his occupation. His back was to the door: on his left was a strip of polished floor, which the carpet did not cover, the boards of which, being old and having been much trodden on, sloped towards the door. On these boards had stood the tin case which had been upset, and now lay the papers which had fallen from it; while behind them was the little table, covered with a cloth, on which he had arranged his cognac and the candle. On his right was a larger table, destined to receive such documents as he might select from the litter below, and already supporting the desk.

It was astonishing how many civil and kind notes from officers of all ranks the old fellow had treasured up. Some of them were even commendatory or complimentary. And these he went leisurely over, picking out those likely to be useful, and putting them on his right hand, ready to go to-morrow morning into another box. Every now and then he took his desk and there-

on noted in a memorandum-book the manner in which a document would be most effective: every now and then, too, he took a sip of brandy to cheer him in his task.

Now it came to pass that, after this occupation had been continued some time, Wiggy, having come upon a decidedly laudatory document from an officer of rank, paused some time over it, read it again and again, and finally took off his spectacles and leaned back in his chair that he might muse on this timely find, and discover how best to apply it.

The conversation with du Lys, and the narration of his skilful diplomacy, had animated the old gentleman, and he had considerably exceeded the quantity of brandy which he usually took when dosily smoking with his evergreen friend, and making laconic observations at intervals of from three to five minutes. Hence there was a little disposition to torpor, which the pleasant tone of the note and the complacent reverie much encouraged. While he read or wrote, the soothing influence was kept at bay; but as soon as he surrendered himself to meditation there was danger of his commanding faculties being temporarily subdued. Smoke-proof as he generally was, the vapour passing right into his nostrils, now that his head was back, did exercise a narcotic influence. By degrees the words of the letter became indistinct and were

momentarily changed in his memory for other words, which, causing a little shock, roused him so that he recovered the thread again. He recovered it only to lose it once more, and the recoveries became partial and the fantastic wordings more or less established. It was a dispute of some duration, but at length the powers of dreamland conquered. He was far away in some gorgeous region where royalty and beauty, together acknowledging his transcendent services, were bestowing on him his well-earned reward. He had asked as an additional boon that a certain fair hand might present to him the outward signs of his desert and fame. The request was accorded. In excess of gratitude and devotion he was sinking to his knee, that he might receive with due humility and devotion the crown of his great endeavours. He was aware of some commotion at this supreme crisis of his fortunes—the natural agitation, it seemed, of a distinguished assembly stirred to its depths by a heroic incident; but this subsided, and was succeeded by a long and dazzling vision of greatness.

It had really happened that when Wiggy thought he was going on his marrow bones, he gave a large start in his chair, not violent enough to wake him, but sufficient to give motion to the castors under the legs, one of which was on the edge of the table-cloth on his left, it (the cloth) being too large for the little table, so

that its border descended to the floor. The boards beneath were, as has been said, bare and polished. The consequence was, that the start of the occupant made the chair move several inches ; and, unhappily, it moved to the right, dragging the table-cloth, upsetting the brandy-bottle on the floor, and the candle among the papers. This *bouleversement* it was, probably, which suggested to the happy sleeper the idea of a powerful working of suppressed emotion in an august multitude.

The sleeper slept on, and his dream continued ; but meanwhile his papers were in a blaze, and his brandy, flowing in a stream from the broken bottle, was finding its way along the slightly-inclined boards to the door, under which having made its way, it essayed to cross the passage. The mat which should have dammed it had been pushed aside by the gallant colonel himself in his endeavours to steer himself to the door, and so there would have been uninterrupted communication with the staircase but for the dress-basket which stood against the latter.

How far removed were the thoughts of the dreamer from damage or danger ! Yet fate had willed that both damage and danger should come to him. She—that is, fate—had laid her snare so that the slightest movement should loosen its springs ; as when some fair one touches a wedge and a wooden castle rushes into the deep.

Placidly he dreamt—dreamt of all things gay, as young hearts are exhorted to do. And as his dream proceeded, the fire in the papers burnt up to the spirit-bottle, and thereupon a thin blue fire began to mingle with the yellow flame. Presently the blue took its own course and followed on the track of the brandy, working gently and steadily toward the door, while the more noisy yellow fire challenged attention by crackling among the papers and licking the legs of the furniture.

The justest of the just could not have slumbered more peacefully or determinedly. The table was burning, the floor was being charred, the skirting was on fire; but the blue flame did not rage or rush,—it crept quietly along. About eighteen inches from the inside of the door the main stream of spirit had allowed a tiny rivulet to part from it, and to make off toward two empty cigar-boxes, while it kept on itself towards the staircase.

It is probable that the house of Warner did not entertain any household gods; if it did, those gods deserved to lose their divinity,—to be reduced to the rank and pay of the lowest order of deities for gross neglect of duty. Just at that moment the slightest intervention would have prevented alarm. The paper and furniture would have succumbed to a simple smothering with the hearthrug, and the drawing of a

sponge, a cloth, or even of the sole of a boot across the streaks of blue flame would have broken the continuity of the brandy and extinguished the flame by lack of sustenance. A moment more and it was too late. The blue fire had seized on the cigar-box, which incontinently blazed up with yellow fire and ignited its fellow which lay upon it. Its fellow communicated the "devouring element" to Colonel Warner's wrapper, and things inside the room began to look bright in a fashion not desirable.

And, as if the conflagration in the room was not enough, the blue flame soon made its way to the wicker-basket with the dresses. The oiled cover was a little coy at first, but finally yielded, and "owned a mutual flame," as the poets say. The broad sheet of cover blazed up, the wicker-work crackled, the dresses inside—light summer dresses—burst out burning on the first application as if they rather liked the sort of thing. Altogether there was a formidable mass of fire now attacking the stair. How far would it get before somebody should be alarmed and should attempt to check it!

CHAPTER XIV.

A FIRE AND A SURPRISE.

WHEN du Lys got into his rooms at the Ipswich he saw lying on his table sundry packets, the appearance of which was not altogether unexpected. He had sent his man to the Guards' club-house for letters although he had not gone thither himself, and these were the result: one with the Cornish postmark, probably from Treworden; another his banker's account, which did not promise to be cheering; and another an account of a memorial which already was being subscribed for, in recognition of services performed in the war. He was not very sleepy, for they had made an easy journey on account of the sick lad—merely crossing from Calais and coming up by train. So he sat down quietly to look at these despatches, thinking he would sleep all the better for not lying down with the smell of the smoking-room still in his nostrils, and

old Wiggy's yarn still ringing in his ears. He opened Treworden's letter.

That honest fellow wrote as if he were one of the most favoured of mortals, as if he had never been out of the sunshine. There was not a word of regret or repining in the whole letter; indeed it was the letter of a man who felt perfectly happy. He was now married. His father had come to his aid more effectually than he had believed to be possible, and had set Charlotte up in business on her own account. Treworden kept accounts for her, looked after their household affairs, and managed two or three fields close to the town. His general health was quite restored; and altogether he seemed to see things in such a rosy light that it looked as if all his previous history had been but a preparation for the state of felicity to which he had now attained.

Such a result, du Lys thought, of the dreadful punishment to which Treworden had been subjected, ought to make those who were suffering in a less degree patient and trustful.

Having reached this point, he found himself yawning, and thought he might as well retire to rest. So he put his papers into a despatch-box, and was about to withdraw, when suddenly in the street, under his window, there was a great commotion, heavy footfalls, much buzzing, some shouting, and all the indications

of a crowd rushing by. The window was open, and he put out his head, demanding what was the matter; but either the noise below was too great to admit of his being heard, or else every one was too busy to answer him. He put on his hat and descended the stairs, making for the main entrance, the door of which was still open. A policeman was passing; him he stopped; and he inquired what the excitement was about. "Fire a little way down the street, sir." "Indeed!" and du Lys made one of the crowd, and pushed forward to the scene of the mischief. There was no flame to be seen, but after he had gone a little way he made out some clouds of smoke in which were moving many persons but indistinctly perceived. Much of this smoke was pouring from the doorway, and much from the upper windows, at some of which females were screaming. He could not be sure about the house, but it struck him as very like that in which he had recently deposited old Wiggy. There was, however, no time for settling whether it was the old fellow's residence or no, seeing that the distressed females engaged everybody's attention. "Why don't they bring them down?" he asked of a bystander. "Stairs on fire, sir. Can't get up or down. Brigade will be here immediately, and they'll probably bring some fire-escapes."

Du Lys made his way back now with some difficulty

to the Ipswich and hailed the porter. "You've got some ladders here?" said he. "Yes, sir." "Then let's get one out at once." He got a policeman and two or three hands from the crowd, dropped through to the yard, and had a ladder out in a twinkling. The people made way for them when it was seen what they were carrying. The engines had not arrived; the females were making piteous appeals from the windows. "Calm yourselves. We'll get you all down," he shouted; and they planted the ladder against a first-floor window. Instantly du Lys ran up it and plunged into an apartment in which gas-lights were burning, but which was full of smoke. There were three or four women in the room. A lady at another window was nearly exhausted with her cries and fears, and now that help had come, had lost her head and could make no effort. Nevertheless the anxieties of the whole party seemed to be directed to her, and in accents more or less pathetic they all asked how she could be got down.

"Manage among you to hand her to me when I'm on the ladder," said du Lys, "and I'll answer for it I get her down. Now then"—and he got through the window again and stood on a rung of the ladder. The lady put out her head, then screamed and drew back. The other women encouraged and lifted her, but to no purpose. She was paralysed from fright. In this

crisis one of the females lifted her in her arms with a great effort and placed her on the sill. Du Lys drew her on to the ladder, fainting and almost motionless. "Rouse yourself, madam," he said, sharply; "you are out of the house now, and have only to make the effort necessary for descending to the street, which is not far below." His words had the desired effect, and coupled with so much of the open air as could reach her through the smoke, they revived her somewhat, and she supported herself.

"Now then, my arms are quite round you, so that you cannot possibly slip: feel downwards with one foot till you find a lower step—that is right—now bring the other foot down. It's quite easy, you perceive. Go on that way for a minute and you will be on the pavement."

Then du Lys looked up to the faces at the window, saying—

"Keep quiet for a minute and I will be up again. Believe me, you will escape quite safe."

The lady whom he was assisting was more than a minute in making the descent; but she did make it. Du Lys placed her in charge of one of the people belonging to his hotel, and desired him to conduct her thither, while he returned for another of the imperilled ladies. In respect to one of these, however, he was saved all trouble. The lady, a tall and apparently

powerful woman—the same who had lifted the first lady to the sill—had, while he was disposing of his first charge, swung herself on to the ladder unaided. She descended without hesitation, and before the first lady had moved away three steps, had joined her and was supporting and cheering her.

They disappeared, and du Lys ran up again, and got down the two others, whom he also sent under escort to the Ipswich. By this time the firemen with their engines were on the spot. They speedily discovered that the fire was almost confined to the stairs, and they sent on to that region a flood of water which soon diminished the violence of the conflagration. As soon as the officer in charge of the firemen had made his arrangements and could be spoken to, du Lys asked to be allowed to enter at the door, as he believed there was on the ground floor a gentleman with whom he was acquainted. He was allowed to enter, and opened the first door he reached, which admitted him into what the glimmer from the street lamps outside showed to be a bedroom. A light, however, shone through a half-open door, and to that door he advanced. Passing through it he saw many traces of fire, but no fire was burning except the gas-lights, which were calmly shining away as if nothing unusual had been going on.

Serenely slumbering in his chair was Lieutenant-

Colonel Warner, a beam of satisfaction on his face from some agreeable vision.

"Ye gods, preserve me," muttered du Lys, "from believing in brandy! but I am sore tempted. Here has this old spirit-drinker been resting calmly during all this noise and danger: neither they nor any sound, except the trumpet which is to wake the dead, would rouse him. I must disturb him, for his property has suffered damage already, and the fire may break out again, though that isn't likely. Colonel! Colonel Warner!" (shaking him).

Wiggy slowly opened his eyes, looked sleepily round the room, and then said, "Been something wrong here, eh?" and stretched his left hand for the brandy and found it not. Its disappearance did that which neither fire nor tumult could: it moved his energies a little. "The bottle is broke, and not a cursed drop left," he exclaimed. "How the devil can this have happened? Somebody must have been in and knocked the table over: you see the candle is down; and those papers were invaluable. Most important documents among them. Thought you'd gone home, du Lys. What brought you back?"

"Well, the fire brought me back," answered du Lys, as he picked up the Colonel's spectacles, which had fallen with the candle and bottle. "Why, your house has been on fire."

"Has it?" said Wiggy, quite tranquilly. "Is it out now?"

"I'm afraid not out; but they're getting it under. Look here, it has been all round you; your wrapper's burnt."

"That's unfortunate. I'll see to it in the morning. You say the fire's got under?"

"Well, I'll just look. Yes, they say there's no fear of it spreading now," said he, returning. "The stairs are gone, which is about the worst of it."

"The stairs hardly concern me," said Colonel Warner. "Women above all safe, I suppose?" Du Lys nodded.

"Then I think I'll turn in. Be daylight in half an hour, by Jove!"

"I thought I'd make you aware of the danger. Now that you know it you must take care of yourself. Good night, once more."

In answer to the inquiries which he made on returning to the Ipswich, du Lys was informed that the ladies who had come from the burning house were in No. 17. When he sent to ask whether he might wait on them in No. 17, and when he let them know his name, he was bidden to present himself at once.

No. 17 had but two occupants when he entered. In a chair, not half recovered, the lady whom he had brought down the ladder; and standing by her, apply-

ing a smelling bottle, the stronger female who had come down the ladder unassisted.

"Why, Beauclerc," said the lady in the chair, in a very weak voice, "how extraordinary that it should have been you who rescued us!"

"Good heavens, Lady Sarah Gard! is it possible that you are the person whom I was so happy as to assist? I am truly fortunate. I trust your alarm is subsiding."

"Yes, I am better. I shall be myself again to-morrow. But I am very delicate, you know, and not equal to any excitement."

"No, surely. I am thankful it was no worse. None of your property is injured, I am happy to say. The stairs have suffered chiefly. You will have to change your residence, but that is the worst."

"Here is somebody else who will like to thank you."

He looked at the other lady, and made a move towards her as to an old acquaintance, then suddenly checked himself, looking puzzled, and bowed.

"Colonel du Lys, will you not behave to me a little less coldly than that?"

"Certainly, if I am permitted. A thousand pardons. I feel that I ought to know you," said he, taking her hand.

"I am Thyrsa Knowles."

“Thyrza Knowles,” repeated he, unable for an instant to connect the name with Lady Sarah or a scene like that. “What! of Brigend? I believe you are, indeed. But it’s all a mystery. I can’t comprehend.”

“I’m not a villager now. We’ve found many kind friends, and mother’s recovered a little money. And Lady Sarah Gard has had the goodness——”

The style of this speech was as like as well could be to that which Thyrza habitually used two years ago. She had been studying to improve it, that she might impress du Lys favourably, and now here she was meeting him with an address no better than she might have uttered in her peasant days. Du Lys, for his part, began to suppose that Thyrza’s rise in the world meant that she had become an attendant on Lady Sarah Gard. It was Lady Sarah who interrupted Thyrza, as above. She said—

“Miss Knowles turns out to be a lady of high connections—a relation of yours, Beauclerc, for instance. She was a fairy princess in disguise, but she has cast her mask and domino and is now a person of fashion. Miss Knowles is at present my guest, I am happy to say, and has left her mother and her home for a while in order that she might come and realise town life. You shall have farther particulars, my dear Beauclerc, to-morrow. But now tell me of Sir Geoffrey du Lys, and Lady Helen. How is the poor boy?”

Then du Lys answered a few questions, and perceived that Lady Sarah had done much more than she was equal to, and that she must be left to repose. He took his leave with the less reluctance that he was to have another interview in the morning. It was after daybreak when he went to bed, and he got but little sleep then—thinking of his extraordinary meeting with Thyrza Knowles, and of Thyrza's changed condition. Wiggy Warner at the club, and the fire and Wiggy's trance all through the hubbub, would have been remarkable enough matters under ordinary circumstances, but this rencontre with Thyrza eclipsed all other adventure. Thyrza a lady! Who or what could she really be? Well, he would soon know. Meanwhile there was no doubt that Thyrza was still handsomer than of old. What an extraordinary business, to be sure. All this was repeated until late in the morning, when du Lys sank into a slumber which lasted an hour or so.

And Thyrza? Thyrza was, on the whole, much delighted. The sudden and almost romantic manner in which the long desired meeting had come about had given an extra charm to it; and du Lys's behaviour at the time of the sudden recognition had been to her extremely satisfactory. It must have been a purely unrehearsed part, and he played it so as to assure her that their former acquaintance was fresh in his mem-

ory. Du Lys, personally, had changed somewhat, but the change was precisely what Thyrza would have desired to find in him. She had admired him because he was so fastidious and so elegant ; so refined (as it seemed to her) from all the grossness of humanity. (Thyrza, we remember, had always in her peasant days a liking for polite life, of which she knew nothing ; and this stainless specimen had surpassed her idea.) But du Lys in the battle-field had raised another sort of appreciation in Thyrza : she admired him for new qualities which her own true sense showed her to be more commendable than daintiness. As she became acquainted, and at last intimate, with well-bred people, she understood what sort of being your purely fine gentleman is. Where she once fancied that du Lys stood pre-eminent above mortals, she found now that he shared his excellences with many, and indeed with the most contemptible and useless of mankind. Without, perhaps, ever strictly defining her own feelings, she had long ceased to worship du Lys as a *petit-maitre* ; he had risen to be a hero. And inasmuch as he was now more manly, more frank in his manner, without being in the least less gentle or impressive, his progress had answered her requirements in a marvellous way.

But few delights are without alloy. All at once, now that du Lys had been recovered, Thyrza found

herself exposed to the rivalry of all the women in the *beau monde*; and the thought of that competition chilled her heart. Everyone must admire him, and what chance had she of obtaining a prize so eagerly and so generally sought? Up to yesterday her desire had been to see him, and what might happen after they should have met was not allowed a prominent place in her thoughts. Now they *had* met, and the "what next?" was already distracting her. She realised now, as she had not done before, the state of mind in which poor Emma Seward lately gave her confidence.

Lady Sarah Gard and Miss Knowles lay down that night in their clothes much as they had come to the hotel, for they had nothing with them but what they wore. At the first alarm Lady Sarah's butler had ascertained that the danger was, for the time being, not close to their apartments; and he had exerted himself with success to restrain persons in the upper storeys, who were for throwing things from the windows. After the ladies' escape he had secured the doors of their apartments; and he had advised that, until the crowd should have dispersed, no one should be permitted to enter. Thus, until some time after daylight, not so much as a dressing-bag could be taken to the refugees.

They were very thankful that matters were no

worse; and they made their toilets in the morning rather in spirits. They did not, however, rise both at the same hour. Miss Knowles was on foot as soon as she knew that an instalment of luggage had been brought in; but Lady Sarah was advised to go to bed for an hour or two, and did so.

Soon after noon came a message of inquiry from Colonel du Lys, and a request that he might be admitted if it were not too early to receive visitors. Thyrsa considered a while whether she might admit him while she was alone; she could see no objection, and she desired—oh, so ardently!—to know how he would address her when they were alone together—whether they would be again as they used to be of old. She signified that he would be received.

He entered the room gay and smiling; but even the self-possessed du Lys was checked a little in his advance up the room by the sight of Thyrsa standing there to receive him. He had been fond of saying to himself in old days that she would be one of the most splendid of Britain's daughters if only she were attired as a gentlewoman. The gods had realised his idea: here it was breathing before him; and he was amazed at the sight. Thyrsa was holding out her hand with an uncertain expression on her face. Du Lys, instantly recovering himself, went forward and took the hand, saying—

"I hope you have quite recovered from the alarm—ah—I suppose it may be Miss Knowles now?"

Thyrza did not answer. "Well then, Thyrza once more, but for the last time."

"I don't know why the last time," said Thyrza, simply. "I haven't grown proud."

"No, I am sure not; but you have changed your station."

"Will you not sit down?"

"Thank you. It is an unexpected pleasure to meet you here in town when I was supposing you to be so far away."

"Is it a pleasure?"

"Can you ask? Assuredly it is a great pleasure."

"Then why can't you speak as you used to do, and not as if we had never met before?"

"A young lady in a drawing-room isn't to be addressed exactly the same as a country girl in the Vert woods. But I assure you I haven't at all forgotten our former acquaintance. I can see you now on the grey horse, and I can see you stepping among the May flowers in the meadows. If it had been proper to speak now as freely as I spoke then, I should tell you that you've grown ten times handsomer since I saw you last, and that I am sure nature must always have intended you for a lady of condition."

A blush overspread Thyrza's neck, and rose up to

her forehead. "No, that's not what I meant," said she, smiling.

"I don't half understand what has happened to you," said he.

"And I don't properly understand what has happened to you."

"Nothing extraordinary in my case. But your fortunes *would* appear to have been extraordinary. So be so kind as to explain first—then it will be my turn."

"It is soon told," said Thyrza, forgetting all her studied style, and sliding back to the pastoral. "I had an uncle at Scrone who used to assist us very much, especially when mother was ill. He died rather suddenly, and left little or no property; and we were so poor that we couldn't pay the rent of the cottage—St Ann's Cottage in Brigend, you remember. We hoped that mother might be taken into some charitable establishment, and then I would have got employment somewhere. But when we gave notice that we must give up the cottage, Lord Hardyknute, the owner, the kindest and the best of men——"

"As good a fellow as ever breathed," put in du Lys, softly.

"Lord Hardyknute came and told us we were not to leave, and the rent was of no consequence; and that trouble was escaped, thanks to him. Soon after that

mother came into a little property that she had known nothing about before—yes, she did know about it, but she didn't expect it. Mother was of good family, but father wasn't. I don't know quite how her property had been kept away from her, but Lord Hardyknute would tell you. They found some papers which gave it her. And then Lord Hardyknute and Miss Seward came to visit us, and we went to Malmseymead; and it was found that mother had grand relations. And some of them acknowledged us very kindly, and some didn't. We are cousins of Lady Sarah Gard; and she is more than kind to us, and we like her so much."

"Really! Why, Lady Sarah is a relation of mine, but by her mother's side, not the Duke's."

"It is the Duchess's house that mother is connected with."

"What! an Angevine?"

"Yes. Do you remember how unfitting you thought it that I should be named Thyrza? It is a family name it seems."

"Of course. Lady Thyrza Valery was an Angevine."

"That's all about me," said Thyrza. Now I want you to tell me about that cruel wrong you have suffered. I know something about it, but not clearly. I want to know whether you have come back to get it righted, and when it will be done."

"First, let me tell you," answered du Lys, "that I do not complain now—although I once did loudly complain—of having suffered a very grievous wrong. My chief grievance is that they who inflicted the penalty did so in deference to a pressure from without, and not from a sense of justice. But if they behaved ill, I think that I was hot-headed and obstinate. I think, too, that I took a wrong view of matters. I can't tell when they may be likely to restore me to full pay, or whether they ever will, but I certainly mean to see what can be done."

"The fighting is all over now," said Thyrsa.

"Yes, we have done with the war."

"But I read all about how you fought and were victorious, and how you were promoted, and about your wound; was it very dreadful?"

"It was bad enough at the time, but it is quite well now. It was on this arm," holding up the member.

Thyrsa started. She had not reflected that she was in the presence and proximity of the very arm that had been so gloriously injured, and that had caused her such solicitude.

"Your home is still in the Vert district?" asked du Lys.

"Yes; still not very far from Wyde."

"And how is the cripple Clipp, and how are his family?"

"Oh, they are doing well. The family at the Tower of Lys was very kind to them; and when Lord Hardyknute heard me speak of them accidentally, he immediately found them out and befriended them."

"And Dr Plowman, is he still at Wyde?" asked du Lys, smiling.

"Dr Plowman is still there," answered Thyrsa, radiant at his allusion to the adventure which had caused their acquaintance.

"Your good fortune was extreme in having Hardyknute know of your affairs, and stand your friend."

"I know it. I can never forget it. If I were to give him my life I could hardly repay his goodness," answered she with fervour.

"And you are much in society now?"

"Just at present, yes. Lady Sarah Gard is anxious that I should see as much as possible, and is indefatigable in her quest of amusement; she often does too much, I fear."

"Possibly her ladyship may be as anxious that you should be seen as that you should see. By the by, how is Lady Sarah this morning?"

"She was asleep when you were announced. I daresay I shall find her awake presently. I will tell her of your visit." This was the first mention by either of them of anything but their own affairs; the world outside seemed to have been quite forgotten.

"Well, I am detaining you. I hope we shall meet frequently, and that it may not be found necessary to decline my society" (this was in allusion to Thyrza having banished him in former days).

"I don't think it will. Do you remember this?"

"I should not have known it if I had met it in Paris, but I remember something of its kind."

"I have treasured it, you see. It was the only bit of gold ornament I possessed till last year."

"It was kind of you to guard it so long, and I am grateful, nay, more than grateful, I am flattered and proud. If London have not changed much in the last two years, there is many a gallant of high pretension who would give his income to know that a gift taken from his hand was resting near your heart."

"I used to admire you because you didn't talk nonsense to me."

"I am as little disposed to talk nonsense now as ever. But I am most delightfully surprised, and I had your permission—nay, your command—not to be artificial in my conversation. Well, good-bye for, I hope, only a short time. I am in this hotel, and will do anything that may be necessary in consequence of the fire."

"Good-bye," said Thyrza; it has been like conjuring, hasn't it?"

The afternoon of that day was spent by the ladies

in consulting about a new residence, and in receiving the visits of friends who had heard of the fire and came pouring in to offer congratulations on their escape from serious danger. It was a striking advertisement of du Lys's return to the world of fashion, this announcement of his having rescued two ladies from the burning house,—which announcement was made with many details in the story, of which he had never heard or thought.

Du Lys, after his interview with her, was engrossed by the desire to understand Thyrza's history as a man of business would tell it. Of course he had no doubt that Thyrza had correctly informed him of all the general points, but he wanted to know especially how the change in her family had come, and how she was connected with the Angevines. If he had been asked why all this anxiety, he would have said with truth, "Well, I know her; and she is a handsome girl, and her father was a tenant of my father. What more natural than that I should desire to learn particulars of the curious story?" But whether he knew it or not, this was only part of what was in du Lys's mind. Somewhere deep in its folds lay a consciousness that his acquaintance with Thyrza had been of such a character, and was felt by her to be of such a character, that he must either be her open admirer or he must withdraw himself from her society and

neighbourhood. For anything that had already passed, he felt that he was in conscience free ; but if he should pay her any farther attention he ought to follow it up with an offer of marriage. How he meant to comport himself in regard to the matter he certainly could not tell. There were a host of crude thoughts in his mind which he had not digested, and which in his present state of excitement it was impossible that he could digest. But though he was not calm enough to form a clear judgment of a matter in regard to which very many circumstances had to be considered, he could nevertheless learn the particulars of a romance of which Thyrza was the heroine.

He thought first of applying to his family solicitor, who no doubt could find out all he wanted to know ; but he reflected that to do this it would be necessary to make a reference to the Vert district, and he would certainly have to wait some days even if one reference should be sufficient. Slow as this method appeared, viewed by the light of his impatience, there did not seem to be an alternative one as he for a long time thought the matter over. At last he remembered that Thyrza had mentioned Lord Hardyknute as being well informed of her affairs, and that, if he could find Hardyknute, he might get information at once. He tried the club where Hardyknute was most likely to be, but did not find him, and was giving up the attempt

to see him for the present, when some other old friend who had come forward to greet him, and had heard him asking for Hardyknute, told him to go down to the House of Lords about six, and he would be pretty sure to run him to earth there. There was a question coming on, on which he had promised to vote.

Hardyknute was there. He came into the lobby with his blue eyes beaming, and with his pleasant smile, and greeted du Lys heartily. "Hope," said he, "you find those fellows at the Horse Guards more reasonable."

"I haven't been there yet," du Lys answered; "only reached London yesterday, and been busy ever since. I called at the Exquisite, hoping to find you, and should not have bothered you here, only that I want to know something that only you can at once tell me. Could you manage to come into the smoking-room for a few minutes?"

"Certainly, my dear fellow; for half an hour if you like."

They went thither and lounged. "What I have to ask," said du Lys, "is concerning Mrs and Miss Knowles, whom, I believe, you know—indeed I am sure you do, for I hear you were very kind to them."

Lord Hardyknute had looked sharp round at the mention of the name, but he saw no answering expression on du Lys's face, and du Lys did not observe his

look. "The father was a tenant of my father's, and rented the Sandacres, as you probably know. When I left England the mother and daughter were poor cottagers at Brigend ; now when I come back I find Miss Knowles with my relative Lady Sarah Gard, and am told they have had some favourable reverse of fortune, and that you can explain what it is."

"I believe I know all about it. Mrs Knowles is descended, through her mother, from one of the earls of High Vert. Her grandmother possessed the Claybarrow property ; I daresay you know the place."

Du Lys nodded.

"The title-deeds were mislaid in some extraordinary way. The tenant found out or suspected this, and refused to surrender the estate, although it was known that the lease had expired. Mrs Knowles's father, a man named Betwold, made great efforts to find the papers, but always without success. Lately they have turned up in an unexpected way, having been observed by a lawyer who was hunting for documents belonging to another property. It is supposed that they had been made over in pledge, by Mrs Knowles's grandfather, in consequence of a racing transaction ; but that is only a guess. However, there the deeds were ; their tenor was undeniable. The Claybarrow had certainly been of right Mrs Betwold's. Mrs Knowles's only brother had just died rather suddenly,

and so she inherited the property. It is worth £600 a-year or thereabout, and the lady is able now to live comfortably in a house near Wyde."

"And her descent: is it traceable to the Angevines without a blot?"

"Unquestionably it is," said Hardyknute, rather warmly.

"Well, I'm only very glad to find that it is so. You see, I knew about the mother and daughter, and was anxious to know in what way fortune had come to them."

"I remember they were equally anxious about you when you went abroad last year. Mrs Knowles made special inquiries, which I could not answer, though I thought I was as well informed about you as most people. They appeared so interested that I came up to town express to see what farther could be gleaned about you."

While Hardyknute was making this remark he remembered Thyrza's spirited behaviour in the library, and a disagreeable sensation shot through his breast as he viewed in connection Thyrza's vindication of du Lys's behaviour, and du Lys making it his first and pressing business on his return to inquire about her fortunes. The reflection kept him silent for a minute, after which, said he—

"I say, du Lys, there's no secret about this matter,

and I'm very glad to answer your questions concerning it as much as you like, only excuse me if I say I don't understand your making this, as I may say, your first business on your return to England."

"It is easily explained. Up to midnight I had not an idea of speaking to you on the subject; but, after the fire, when I unexpectedly found Miss Knowles——"

"Fire! what fire?"

"Surely you heard about the fire in Jermyn Street?"

"Not a word. Tell me. Quick!"

"There was nobody hurt, and none of our lady friends suffered loss to speak of. Nevertheless, it is a fact that the house took fire, and Lady Sarah and Miss Knowles were burnt out."

"Bless my soul; you don't say so! And where are they now?"

"At the Ipswich for the present."

"And you say they are unhurt?"

"Entirely so. I was going on to tell you that I was in the same street, and when going to bed heard a great thronging outside, which proved to be a multitude hurrying to the fire. I got a ladder and rescued three or four women without knowing who they were. On seeing them again at the Ipswich I recognised Lady Sarah, and Lady Sarah's companion recognised

me. My astonishment was great, as you may suppose, at meeting Miss Knowles as a gentlewoman. She could not, except very generally, explain how the change had come about; but said that you could. After I had called to inquire for them this morning I made straight for the Exquisite to ask you about this romance, of which my mind was full. Met Leominster, who told me I should be sure to find you here. *Voilà tout.*"

"Dear me, I wonder when this plaguy debate will end. I did not sleep in town last night, and I have been too busy all day to read the papers. Burnt out! What a frightful thing it might have been!"

"Well, you'll be glad to get back and hear what is being said in the House. Thank you very much for having this little talk with me." And they parted.

"Told you you'd find Hardyknute here," said Lord Leominster, who came upon du Lys in the passage.

"Yes, you were quite right, thanks."

"Deuced good fellow he is, to be sure. Hope matrimony won't change him."

"Matrimony! What! is Hardyknute going to marry?"

"So the world says. Thought you must have heard."

"No indeed, but it interests me very much to hear of it now. Who is the lady; his cousin?"

"I don't think she's his cousin. The girl, you know, that everybody's raving about this season. *The* beauty, Miss Knowles. By the by you were the very man that rescued her this morning. Nine-tenths of the men in London must be envying you."

"I had not the slightest idea that I was assisting the future Lady Hardyknute."

"Well, don't quote me. I only know what I hear the rest of the world say; and I daresay you'll hear the same story from a dozen people before you're much older."

Du Lys *did* hear it, over and over again. Numbers complimented him on his knight-errantry, and hardly one failed to drop a remark about Hardyknute's attachment. If what everybody said must be true, Thyrza Knowles was disposed of, and he might calm his perplexity concerning her. It was no wonder that Hardyknute asked why he had been in such haste to learn the last chapter of Thyrza's history.

Well, du Lys was philosophical; at any rate he always took a philosophical view of a contretemps at first, although the philosophy was apt to ooze away, and human feeling to reassert itself, as had been the case when Thyrza desired him to avoid her society. "Very good," thought he; "then I shall have no difficulty in regulating my conduct towards Miss Knowles. My part is written for me, as it were. Wish I'd known

it a little sooner though, that I might have been saved the reflection that I ever framed ideas concerning her. She's a good girl, and I rejoice that she'll get so good a husband. Couldn't be a better fellow. But, by Jove! fancy: who could have foreseen that the fine active lass whom I saw scampering away on a man's saddle would be a peeress in a couple of years? Wonder what I should have done if it hadn't been for this; but, after all, that's an unprofitable speculation. Now then, I'll attend a little to my own affairs. There's plenty to occupy my mind." This was mood the first.

CHAPTER XV.

RIVALRY AND MISUNDERSTANDING.

HER interview with du Lys left on the mind of Miss Knowles a delightful sensation. That was all she knew for the present ; for she was so occupied during the afternoon that she could not then meditate on all that had occurred. Everybody of their acquaintance came to see that they were alive, and to express satisfaction at their escape. Miss Seward came and hugged Thyrza as if she had been restored to her from the dead. It was the first opportunity which Emma had had since Thyrza was so candid with her, of showing how much she appreciated that candour. But Emma was not allowed to have Thyrza to herself. Dozens of people were anxious to see how she looked after such a night ; and some young lords and gentlemen, exquisites of the most superfine class, when they knew that Miss Knowles had scrambled through the window and come down a ladder by herself, admitted that it was,

as one of their number expressed it, "ah—demd spiwited—ah!" and came that day to worship at her shrine. It was with difficulty that she could snatch ten minutes to send a few lines to her mother to advertise her that no mischief had happened.

As for Lady Sarah Gard, she rallied rapidly when she had had a little rest in bed, and when, on waking, she perceived that she would be a lioness for a few hours. If the fright had been very disagreeable, the *éclat* of having escaped through a first-floor window in the dead of the night was some compensation. Foreseeing how people would talk, she had said to Thyrza before the *levée* began, "We shall be thought worthy of Lady Thyrza Valery, to whom we are both near of kin."

In the evening came Hardyknute, full of concern at the accident, and at not having been informed of it earlier, so that he might have offered assistance. "You know," said he, "I would have left anything and everything to have come to you if I knew you to be in peril," as if anybody could doubt Hardyknute's goodwill. He talked now of coming to stay at the Ipswich until the ladies should move, that he might be at hand in case of any farther disaster; but being reminded that du Lys was in the house, who had shown himself such an efficient aid, he at last gave up that idea.

Du Lys did not appear again that evening, and every visitor being at last away, the ladies retired early. Then, in her chamber, Thyrza at last was able to think freely over du Lys's visit. He had been, she thought, as gracious as he had ever been. His mind had seemed to be full of their former acquaintance to the exclusion of every other subject. He had been greatly pleased when he saw how Thyrza had preserved the locket. His interest had been great in the change of fortune that had befallen her. She had lost nothing, it appeared, by the lapse of time, and she had gained a position which gave her some chance of attaining her wishes. Du Lys had never told her that he was in love with her, and she never hoped that he was. She could not therefore expect him now to behave like a lover. If that should only come later she would be but too thankful. In the meantime the affair between them had been taken up again much where it left off, and that was something. Neither of them had mentioned the box from Turkey, but that might be discussed in a future conversation. A terrible sense of her own unworthiness oppressed Thyrza. Could he ever be satisfied with her? Would other women, more attractive than herself, ever give her a chance of winning him? But away with misgivings; so far there was nothing to discourage, and difficulties might safely be left until they presented themselves. She went

back to the enchantment of the long interview of the morning, remembered du Lys's words, thought of his perfections, reflected that happen what might nothing could prevent her loving *him*, felt tranquil and content at length, and fell asleep, and dreamt happily.

Du Lys, after parting from Lord Leominster, showed himself in one or two places where he was quite sure to be greeted, and where repeated mentions of his behaviour at the fire gave opportunities for remarks about Hardyknute's passion, or, as some would have it, engagement. He was soon satisfied that this was something more than a bit of gossip, and he went off to a solitary dinner, assured that Thyrza Knowles was a young lady concerning whose affections both prudence and honour forbade him to speculate farther. While strong in his stoicism, he said to himself, "It is extremely fortunate that I got so quickly at the truth; and the truth, now that I have got at it, is a very fortunate one for me. This girl, whom I did not expect to find in London, would have greatly interfered with the designs upon which I had determined. I am now free again to think principally of my own career, and to endeavour to redeem lost time." And he did, by a strong mental effort, of which he was capable in the early hours of a vexation or disappointment, quite put aside the fire and its consequences, and address himself to professional considerations.

Du Lys, whose judgment was sound and strong, when he gave it fair play, had, during the past year, arrived at some new persuasions regarding his profession, which might possibly affect the whole of his future life. He saw that his previous service had been a mistake; that for a young soldier simply to go abroad and fight bravely, and to a great extent blindly, in time of war, but to spend that part of his life which might not be employed in fighting in lounging about a capital as a man of pleasure, was to follow the profession of arms in a very imperfect manner. It was scarcely by a career of this kind that he could hope to attain to the distinction for which he longed, and to which he, by the fame of his ancestors, stood committed, as he might say. He had had a little taste of success and of fame, and began to experience an appetite for those things, such as the old du Lys warriors may have felt. It was not to be satisfied with small achievements; it demanded a devotion to the service which might qualify him to take a prominent part if there should be war again; and there *would* be war again, he felt certain. In the hope that his opportunity would come, he had determined to be a working soldier, to thoroughly learn his business, and to give his heart to it. Already he despised the life which he had led in former days; already he felt the sympathy which attracted him and his old companions to each

other to be weakened, and likely to vanish away. His new desire was for the company of practical soldiers—fellows who had led hard lives, as well as occasionally stood hard knocks. His fancy for serving only about the person of the sovereign had to give way before the old ambition of his line which was asserting itself at last in his mind—a thing “bred in the bone of him,” as might in homely phrase be said.

That shrewd, but somewhat plain-spoken observer Mackechnie, had said, “When a man has great forbears and auld blude, he canna afford to sit sulking and sneering. If his native land isna gude enough for him he maun go and seek a better; but that, perhaps, he’ll not easily find. The fact is, that in all peoples there’s something one doesna exactly like, and which grates against one’s prejudeeces; but it’s astonishing how this objection demeeneses after one has fairly set himself to win his countrymen’s gudewill. The true value of auld blude is that it steemulates young blude to a life of usefulness and a quest of renown. If ye hear the voices of the dead calling ye to exairtion, then it is well to be of an honourable line; but if ye just wish to repose and to plume yourself upon ither people’s desairts, ye’d better have sprung from a base mechanic who’d have left ye naething to lose;” and du Lys had laid the saying to heart.

One advantage he felt that he had gained from hav-

ing commenced his service in one of the privileged corps, and that was that he had early attained to a rank the duties of which were (as he now viewed them) grave, and worthy of his whole attention. He would immediately ascertain whether his peace could now be made with the authorities, and whether they would give him employment of some kind. And the evening soon passed away as he meditated on what he would like to do, and the means of being put into a position to do it.

It was not until he retired to rest, pretty weary, that he thought again of the engagement of Thyrza and Hardyknute. Having so thoroughly repressed all personal interest in it as to banish it from his mind throughout the evening, and having thus tested his power of self-command, he might venture to look at it now as quite an indifferent subject. The affair had come about, as he could see, in the most natural manner possible. Hardyknute, kind as he always was. Thyrza, a fine, healthy, active, and exceedingly pleasant-mannered young woman. Hardyknute would not be very particular about high education and accomplishments; and as to birth, Thyrza was highly enough connected to satisfy all requirements on that score. Many men of his rank would have looked for a larger fortune than she was likely to possess, but money was just what Hardyknute would be indifferent

to as a recommendation of the woman he loved and was about to make his wife. He hoped with all his heart that they might be happy; and he pictured to himself the satisfaction with which he, a plodding soldier roughing it in the colonies, perhaps might read of their union and afterwards receive occasional notices of their acts and welfare.

This was all very philosophical and dignified, yet du Lys felt somehow that the announcement of Hardyknute's intentions had altered the relations between Thyrsa and himself. But, after all, what had these relations been? He had walked half-a-dozen times with the girl when she was a peasant. It is true he had thought of those walks many times after, but Thyrsa knew nothing of his thoughts; and as for any impression that the said walks might have made upon *her*—why, her reception of Hardyknute's addresses furnished a full answer. It is true that he had fancied that morning that Thyrsa had retained some favourable recollection of him, du Lys. But the girl was remarkably simple and frank, and was not to be judged as an artificial person. By the by it was odd, after making every allowance, that she should seem to regret his not continuing to call her by her Christian name. Even she must know that such regret was hardly permissible, regard being had to the position in which she stood towards another young man.

And, by George, too, what was the meaning of her flourishing in his face, as it were, the locket which he had given her? There surely was no need of that. If *he* said nothing about it, she certainly had the best of reasons for not adverting to it. Odd girl! but no—that wasn't it; she was by no means an odd girl, but straightforward and unaffected as it was possible to be. She might have become less simple in these last two years and developed into something of a coquette, spoiled, perhaps, by the attentions of lots of men all of rank and breeding, such as she had been accustomed to look upon as infinitely above her. Yet, again, how did this idea of coquetry tally with the artless story which she had told of the acquisition of their little competence, and of their circumstances having been so mean that her mother was fain to go into some charitable asylum? If Thyrza was artful at all she was a mistress of art—a consummate actress.

But the idea was absurd of Thyrza being an actress. He was wronging her—honest, candid Thyrza, whose sincerity was apparent in her noble features and in her every action! And here, again, he was met by the recollection of the apparent partiality which Thyrza had that morning shown towards himself. It must be that she retained a grateful recollection of his notice of her at a time when she had no friend, and that she wished him to see that no gift of fortune, and not even

the prospect of a dazzling alliance could obliterate her sense of his kindness. Then there was the recent service which he had rendered at the fire. Her reception of him was hardly the right thing for a young lady situated as she was; but it would not have been remarkable in the village girl that she had been.

And then du Lys, now thoroughly master over sentiment, thought over the events of the meeting—his admiration on first beholding her yesterday; the entire absence of all attempt on her part to speak of the new life she was leading, or of all the fine things which must still be very fine to her; her willingness to retrace old times, and her glad recollection of her village acquaintances and village ways. “A fellow might well be proud of that woman, you know,” thought he; “and I have no doubt Hardyknute will be proud of her, nay, is proud of her. I daresay that if I had been in the way about the time when he first knew her I might have been first favourite, but then what would have become of my military programme? No, no; by-and-by I daresay I may find as fine a girl—but, egad, I am not so sure of that—they’re not so plentiful. Thyrza’s height and her figure, her eyes, her smile—she’s one in ten thousand, no doubt of it.” And ruminating this way on Miss Knowles’s perfections du Lys fell gently asleep.

The reflections had been intended to lead to some

conclusion and resolution as to how he should conduct himself towards Miss Knowles, but they had gone off in a wrong direction, and when he woke in the morning he was still undetermined. But he was wholly a soldier again now, and able to decide readily and sternly. "It doesn't matter," thought he, "what may be exactly the state of her feelings. Hardyknute is courting her and that is enough. I wouldn't stand in Hardyknute's way even if I could, and it isn't at all likely that I can. Moreover, my thoughts are bent just now in quite another direction. I'll be very friendly and so on, but make it clear that I've no pretension as a lover."

His day was spent in seeing men at the different military offices, where they were excessively cold and unpromising. Evidently they were resentful of the feeling he had shown when they made a scapegoat of him and put him on half pay. A year ago he would not have stood a tenth part of the evasions and objections which he now encountered patiently. He went from man to man, stating his wishes and pleading his cause, but they were not forgiving—there was no vacancy in his old regiment, and no staff appointment open. He had a wearisome unpleasant day, and was farther from his object than he had thought himself in the morning.

Not much elated by the result of his exertions, he

went to the opera, where he soon espied Lady Sarah Gard and Miss Knowles, with half-a-dozen beaux in attendance. When he went to them Lady Sarah complained that she had not seen him to thank him properly since the night of the fire. She of course knew of his visit the day before, but she thought he would have been in her apartments again before this. Du Lys excused himself by saying that he had been busy looking for employment, and had really had no time at his disposal.

"I can understand your not giving up other pursuits to call on an old woman," said her ladyship. "But as I have a *belle* as my guest" (glancing towards Thyrza) "I thought you would have found an occasion."

"I hear that your *belle* is very likely to be appropriated, if she is not so already."

"Well, she has never confided a secret of the sort to me. But I own that things seem in a very fair way for her, and I wish the affair a happy issue."

"There is no use in fluttering about a handsome woman who is going to make somebody else happy."

"That was not always your sentiment. But you are an old friend, and I am sure she esteems you highly."

"I assure you the esteem is reciprocated. But, seriously, I am very busy just now."

"How sad is the condition of your nephew. I was with Lady Helen du Lys to-day. I pity her very much."

"Yes, it is a melancholy case. I wish the poor boy could get better."

Here, perceiving an opening near Miss Knowles, du Lys went to say a few words to that young lady. He had seen Thyrza's eyes glisten as he entered the box, and she had looked towards him more than once while he sat near Lady Sarah Gard.

"Lady Sarah Gard has been rating me for not going to see her, but I really have very little time that I can call my own."

"You have so much to do, I suppose, after being two years from home."

"My business is principally at the Horse Guards. I am seeking employment, and it requires a great deal of asking."

"That is right," said Thyrza, looking approvingly at him. "I shall be so glad to hear that you are a real soldier once more. Of course I know that you *are* a real soldier now; but I shall be so glad to hear that you are doing soldier's duties again."

"I think of taking to the general duties of the army, if they will have me. That may mean going abroad, or anything."

"Whatever it may mean, it is the thing I should

wish you to do. After beginning so gloriously it would be dreadful to stop short."

This kindness was at any rate disinterested, du Lys thought.

"Are you fond of the opera?" he asked.

"I like the sight of the house above all things. It is glorious. And I like some of the music, but a great deal of it I don't care for. The scenery is beautiful. As for the acting, it may be all very excellent, but I understand so much better what I see at the English theatres."

"I suppose you have plenty of dancing?"

"If you mean that I go to many dancing parties, yes; but I can't dance."

"Not dance!"

"No. I had so much to learn after my working-time ceased that I thought I would leave dancing until I should have acquired slightly things that are of more consequence."

"How can you ever bear to be among dancers and not to dance yourself?"

"Oh, I bear it very well. It is great amusement to me to see all the beautiful women and their splendid dresses. I never thought the world of fashion was so fine as it is."

"And I am not to hope for the pleasure of dancing with you?"

"Not this year. By next season Lady Sarah says that I *must* dance."

"One cannot reckon on next year. I am so sorry you cannot dance now."

"You would have been much more sorry (would you not?) if I had not learned to speak a little less vulgarly than I used, and if I had not picked up at least the outlines of knowledge such as enters into the ordinary conversation of educated people."

"I should be sorry to see you appear to disadvantage in any way. But there does not seem to be the least reason to dread your doing so. You have too much sense. Of course you ride in the park. You mustn't tell me that you haven't learnt to ride."

"No, I shan't tell you that," replied Thyrza, smiling. "But I must tell you that I have not ridden in London."

"What is the use of people possessing accomplishments and—and—other advantages if they wilfully refrain from using them?"

"Oh, a great deal of use. I only said in London I didn't ride, but in the country I have horse exercise in plenty, and enjoy it so much. That being so I can very well do without it in town, and" (lowering her voice) "her ladyship can only drive, and I should be much away from her if I rode, which would be unkind and ungrateful."

"And have you a nice horse? one that canters with the right leg?"

"I have no horse of my own yet. Lord Hardyknute has never been able to find a suitable one."

"Not Hardyknute?"

"No, never yet. But he has, oh, such delightful horses of his own; and he is kind enough to let me have a horse and groom whenever I choose—always, in fact."

"Then you have had some hunting?"

"Yes; Miss Seward and I went sometimes to the meets. But that is a sore subject, for I am afraid I behaved very unbecomingly one day."

"I should like to judge for myself. May I know what it was?"

"Yes. We ladies were to ride across a few fields, and then draw out of the chase; and so Miss Seward did. But it was an exhilarating morning, the horses were fresh, and mine pulled a little, and I didn't rein him in as I ought, and I quite forgot everything but the enjoyment, and he took me over everything, and I never stopped till we had killed the fox. Lord Hardyknute, I believe, was much annoyed at first; but you know how gentle and forbearing he is. He never scolded, though he was a little ceremonious for a while."

The two might have been in the Vert woods for all they thought of their surroundings.

"I say," said one youth at the back of the box to another, "they tell you she's affable to all alike, and that nobody can interest her particularly. Du Lys seems to do it."

"I suppose it's gratitude for picking her out of the fire. Hardyknute had better look out."

"Believe du Lys was considered an attractive man two or three years ago. Don't quite see his superiority. Good looking man, of course ; but that's not everything."

"Looks like a man to be restored by careful burnishing. But it rarely happens that one who has allowed himself to get at all moss-grown has patience to recover an equable surface."

"I am something of your opinion. A man who has once arrived at the right form should be exceedingly careful not to tamper with his condition. They talk of a woman's purity and so on. *I* think a man's tone is a damned deal more delicate thing. Once lost, probably gone for ever."

This interesting dialogue was interrupted by the entrance of Lord Hardyknute, who looked a little blank at seeing Thyrza so profoundly occupied that she was unconscious of his presence. It was Lady Sarah who diverted her attention by communicating the name of a singer who had just come on. Both she and du Lys looked up and saw the new arrival, whom

Thyrza greeted with a glance of welcome. Du Lys, at sight of him, began immediately to prepare his retreat, and in a minute or two effected it, saying a few words to Hardyknute in passing.

“Deuce take the girl,” said du Lys, as he left the box ; “she makes self-regulation rather difficult. I went to say a word or two that I might not appear cold or capricious, and I become as much engrossed as if I’d been a stripling.” Then he got back to the position from which he had first espied Thyrza, and saw Hardyknute occupying the place which he had vacated, and looking supremely happy. “Small blame to him,” muttered he ; “he’ll have about the most admirable wife in Great Britain.” A second after he added, “And there are devilish few fellows who deserve such luck better.”

Thyrza Knowles revered Lord Hardyknute, and was always gracious to him. She conversed with him now in a lively manner, and none who saw her could pretend that his company or his attentions were not agreeable to her. The distinguished young men behind them, however, perceived that she was not absorbed in her conversation now as she had been while du Lys was near her ; and what was of more importance, Hardyknute himself was not satisfied that her feeling towards him was of the tender kind which he desired to inspire. She was in good spirits, and she talked

without effort. Her pleasant little gossip with du Lys had contented her much. She never had imagined that he would throw himself at her feet the moment he saw her ; she felt that his behaviour did not indicate indifference ; and so that there were but a hope of his preference warming hereafter into passion she could await that result. Emma Seward was not at the opera that evening. She avoided as much as possible scenes where she would see Thyrza and Hardyknute together.

It must be admitted that Colonel du Lys did not continue to keep his regard of Miss Knowles under control as he fancied he could do. There was a charm about the girl which beguiled him of his senses when he was with her, and which left with him soft recollections, which, like bars from some soul-moving strain, would glide into his mind unbidden, and share his thoughts with any subject to which he might endeavour to direct them. He was very readily drawn to her side, and he did not measure time very accurately while he was there. Nevertheless did he most resolutely endeavour to obtain employment "and live laborious days" in seeking to impress the powers at the Horse Guards with the propriety of employing him. The colonel of his late regiment was now in England, distinguished by many tokens of his sovereign's approbation. To him he betook himself, and prayed that

he would use his influence to procure some reversal of the sentence which had been pronounced against him. But the colonel had very little consideration for an officer who could first get his friends into an awkward scrape and then quarrel with them because they were not prepared to brave forces of unmeasured power and violence in defending him. He was very polite, but regretted exceedingly his inability to be of use in the matter. The press, the expedient to which Colonel Warner had resorted, was closed to du Lys. There was not an editor who would have dared to say a word in his favour.

It was a relief to Hardyknute to find that du Lys was diligently seeking for employment, and that he was inclined to hard work rather than to lounging about capitals as a guardsman. He entered into the aspirant's feelings and aims, and did all he could to raise a generous interest on his behalf. He not only addressed himself to those who could directly assist, but he endeavoured, by putting the case favourably before acquaintances, to give a turn to opinion which might work upwards and soften the official mind. The task did not prove an easy one, as he soon found; and other friends of du Lys were equally confounded by the inveteracy with which it seemed determined to keep him on the shelf.

Lord Hardyknute remembered that evening scene

in the library at Malmseymead when Thyrza had been so earnest on du Lys's account. She had not now bespoken his good word for du Lys, but he thought it might gratify her if he let her know that he had been exerting himself in that regard. And he did tell her of what had been attempted, and of the failure hitherto.

"I knew that you would do everything that is kind," said she. "It is a scandalous thing that they do not reverse the wicked sentence against him."

"It is much to be feared they will not—at least not for some time."

"It ought to be done at once," said Thyrza, "while he is young and active. To stop his career now is like subtracting years from his life. Without his military position he is hardly the same person who was so distinguished in the war."

"There is one thing to be considered. If they were to employ him as he wishes he might have to go to some pestilent climate."

"That would be shocking. But, after all, nothing is so bad as remaining under a cloud of this sort. It is a stain on his honour. I am sure he would go to the world's end to take it off. I should rejoice to hear that he was even going to a bad climate, provided his fair fame were re-established."

Hardyknute was now more than ever interested on du Lys's behalf. It was clear that, whatever might

be Thyrsa's feeling towards him, it wasn't love, else she would not be so ready to part with him, and to have his health, perhaps his life, imperilled. He could not comprehend that Thyrsa's idol, despoiled of the least of its jewels, was not the same idol to her. She could bear the loss of it altogether, knowing it to be perfect, rather than possess it in diminished glory. She did not probably realise what a bad climate truly meant, or the trials which a residence in it involved, and she certainly made too much of du Lys's little check in his career. But such was her zeal for the hero of her imagination that she put his honour before all. This was the romance of Thyrsa's life. Romance, and plain sense, and a quiet acceptance of the world's hard necessities may, and often do, coexist in the same breast. Yet the romantic is opposed to the practical character. True ; but is human nature so simple and consistent that it cannot include contradictions ? With sensible people the romantic is the hidden life ; with the silly it appears in their outward practice and perverts their judgment of men and things.

The next time Thyrsa saw du Lys she asked if he had a prospect of success, and he, looking blank, answered that he had not ; indeed that he must now try to reconcile himself to inevitable disappointment. " What will become of me then I cannot foresee," he said. " I must drag through a useless life in spite of myself."

"No," said Thyrza, "you were not made to be useless. You must get back to your profession."

Du Lys smiled.

"Would you," asked Thyrza, with a heightened colour—"would you object, since these military people who ought to do you right seem impracticable, to pressure being put on them through another channel? Would you object to a lady advocating your cause?"

"Certainly not," answered du Lys. "I would bring them to a more favourable disposition by any fair means—by any means that you would approve."

"Thank you," said she. "I had no right to expect so much trust from you. But you do me no more than justice; I would not for the world favour your views by means that you might think unworthy. I cannot speak more plainly at present, but there is a little plan which may be tried."

"Indeed!" said du Lys, smiling again. "It is very kind of you, and of your confederate, whoever he or she may be."

"Would you write down the things that would suit you, so that your friends may know how to act if obliged to do so suddenly?"

"Certainly. I will do so to-night, and let you have my ideas to-morrow. I am not so hard to please as once I was."

CHAPTER XVI.

A DOWAGER TO THE RESCUE.

It seems that there was a very excellent plan. When the difficulties thrown in du Lys's way began to be talked about, Thyrza, although still expecting that he would overcome them, was much annoyed by the perversity of the Horse Guards generally, and she revolved in her mind the possible means of assisting him. How really to work a thing of the sort she had not the remotest idea ; but this was a case in which she thought heroic moves might with propriety be made. She had ideas of petitioning Parliament, and even of throwing herself at the foot of the throne, crying Justice ! justice ! When Hardyknute told her how hopeless the suit appeared, she made up her mind that something out of the common must be done ; yet, prudent even in her enthusiasm, she took an opportunity of discussing the matter with Lady Sarah Gard before determining on anything sensational.

"Have you heard, Lady Sarah," said Thyrsa, one morning, "that the influential people at the Horse Guards will not listen to Colonel du Lys—that they refuse to attend to his wishes?"

"Yes, I did hear that he had been hitherto unsuccessful, and very sorry I am."

"Do you not think that in so iniquitous a case some extraordinary measure might be resorted to? Anything that would expose their scandalous injustice would be likely to correct it."

"My dear," answered Lady Sarah, "they have a thousand tricks for evading an attack even when right and justice are wholly against them. And I am afraid that in this case it can hardly be said that they have not some colourable arguments to advance."

"It cannot be denied that they have been most cruel and arbitrary."

"It would be denied if any appeal were made to public sympathy. Perhaps you don't know that the press was quite as much against Beauclerc as the authorities were. To make a public question of it would probably be to destroy his chance for ever."

"Dear, dear!" said Thyrsa, "then is there nothing that can be done?"

"Nothing but to use interest, the strongest that can be made. I regret to say that I have no particular

friend in the Horse Guards, or I would not hesitate to move in the matter myself."

"I heard Lady Marwood say the other day that she had got a military appointment for her son through the Lord Chancellor. It would seem thus that if you only know influential people it does not matter whether or not you may be personally acquainted with those who have things to give."

"That is quite true. But you see, my dear, my nephew, the duke, is young and wild, and as yet cares nothing about Parliamentary interest, and though I know a great many people who could help, yet there is none whom I could engage, or even ask, to use the amount of pressure necessary to force this matter through."

"I observe in the newspapers that questions about army matters are constantly asked in the House of Commons of the Minister for War. He must therefore have something to do with the army."

"With army finance, Thyrza, and stores, and clerks, and things of that sort; but promotions and appointments to purely military offices are managed at the Horse Guards. Of course a War Minister, if he chose—by the by, my dear, something strikes me which may be of importance."

Yes, Lady Sarah?"

"Why, a leading Minister at the present moment is

old Nepot, a notorious jobber. He is pretty well off now, but he wasn't so always, and he was often glad to get help (he isn't proud) from friends and acquaintances who had means. My husband more than once came to his aid at critical times, when not to have been ready with round sums of money would have been to lose important opportunities of advancement."

"Then he surely owes you something?"

"He used to say that he would never forget how much he owed to my husband's kindness. I am sure he was never asked a favour by us. And I feel that I might, without impropriety, demand his help on behalf of my relative."

"I am so glad you have thought of something. Will you write soon, Lady Sarah?"

"My dear, if I write I may as well spare myself the trouble of communicating with him. His gratitude has no doubt cooled by this, and I have no doubt that he is trafficking his own patronage against that of other departments, so as to benefit his endless nephews and cousins. He would politely answer my note; say he had immediately made application to the Horse Guards, in conformity with my request; and regret that the answer (which he would inclose) should be so unsatisfactory. No, no. I know a little about such things. No writing to such an adept as Nepot."

"How then to interest him?"

"I will go to him—go without notice—storm him, as the soldiers say, before he has time to invent excuses or to resort to subterfuges."

Lady Sarah Gard grew quite excited at the idea of her attack and the strategy with which it was to be executed. It was a long time since she had mediated in any little matter of the kind, and it had all the attraction of novelty. "I will either get a point-blank refusal," she added, "or I will force him to do everything thoroughly. He knows what that means. Yes, Nepot is our man. Not an ill-natured man at all; only a little too anxious, and not over scrupulous about feathering the nest as they call it."

"I know what feathering a nest is," said Thyrza; "I've climbed dozens of trees to look after nests, but I don't see how that applies."

"You know, my dear, your little birds feathered their nests to make soft places for their young ones to lie in: now my friend Nepot uses the whole of his patronage in making soft places, at the expense of the country, for his endless troop of relations. I think he will serve us. If he cannot directly interfere in military appointments he can do so in effect. They are constantly wanting something from him at the military offices, and he must make my relative's appointment the price of some favour, letting one of his nephews wait till next turn."

Her ladyship was in high spirits the whole of that evening, and was desirous of making her *attaque de vive force* the next day; but Miss Knowles, always sensitive about du Lys's honour and interests, entreated for a delay of a day or two that they might obtain his approbation of the design, and be distinctly instructed as to what should be asked for. Lady Sarah Gard could not help admitting that it *was* important that she should know what to ask for: "For," said she, "I ought to be able to rivet an arrangement at once if I get the opportunity."

We have seen that Miss Knowles obtained the necessary permission and credentials. And the very day after she had spoken to du Lys—he having sent in a schedule of his wishes, according to promise—Lady Sarah drove to the office of which Earl Nepot was at the head, sent up her name, was handed out of her carriage by a secretary, and in a minute or two closeted with the Earl in his sanctum. The carriage, with Miss Knowles in it, drew a little away from the entrance, but not so much into retirement but that passers-by, officials, suitors, clerks, and messengers could remark the handsome woman whom it contained.

She, however, was quite unconscious of having attracted any attention. She was thinking of Lady Sarah's interview—battle it might be—with the powerful Minister, and thinking how many were the

chances of miscarriage against the one lucky throw that should bring them all they wanted. "It will speedily be over," thought Thyrza, "if it all goes smoothly. In that case Lady Sarah will be down immediately. Let me see; she has been away five or six minutes already. Now I will note the time, and judge pretty well of the issue of the negotiation before she communicates it;" and Thyrza drew out her watch and kept it in her hand, watching the passage of the minutes. Ten minutes. Twelve. Oh, this looked bad! A quarter of an hour. There must be a contest going on. Eighteen minutes.

"Good morning, Miss Knowles," said Lord Hardyknute. "You are counting the minutes. I doubt not you are anxious to be away and improve them."

"I am afraid I have no such useful intention. Lady Sarah Gard has gone to make some inquiries in the office, and I was calculating how long it might be before she rejoined me. She has been more than twenty minutes away now."

"Well, it is my good fortune that I find you here. I too have been in the office, but my business was with Hanger, one of the under Secretaries, about some question which is to come on to-night."

"I have not seen Miss Seward for some days. I hope she is well."

"I believe she is; but I have not myself seen Emma for two or three days."

"You are not very attentive."

"I am afraid not properly so. But my thoughts are much drawn in another direction just at present, and I fear it is an unfortunate thing for me that they are so."

"You puzzle me, Lord Hardyknute. I cannot understand your allowing your thoughts to run in any but a right direction, and so am at a loss to conceive why they should bring you misfortune."

"I have set my heart upon an object which is, I am afraid, far beyond my attainment. The thought of it is not a misfortune; it is a delight in itself. But it is the disappointment that I fear. *That* will be the misfortune if it comes."

"Oh, then I have not much fear for you," said Thyrsa. "Your lordship is too sensible to long for what is absolutely impossible, and what is merely difficult you are as likely to achieve as any one I know."

"Say you so, dear Miss Knowles? No, I have not sighed for an absolute impossibility; and as to difficulties, your words give me new courage. Remember it is you who bid me not despair; it is you——"

"Beg pardon, my lord. Her ladyship has called up the carriage," said the footman.

There were very few persons who could have desired

to see Lord Hardyknute look ridiculous ; and so it was fortunate that there was no witness of his discomposure except Miss Knowles, who did not perceive that it could make much difference whether he told her now or another time that her observation had made him take heart. He was silent for a moment. Then he let a short and unwonted exclamation escape him ; but presently his blue eyes looked out serene again, and he smiled at the self of a moment since. He had unexpectedly found an opportunity of hinting at, perhaps of speaking out from, the fulness of his heart ; he had wound himself to the avowal, not remembering that the opportunity was of uncertain duration, and cruel chance had checked him in mid-career. He nodded assent to the servant, the horses moved on a few paces, and Lady Sarah Gard, on the arm of a smart private secretary, made her appearance.

“Oh, Lord Hardyknute,” said her ladyship, “how glad I am that you were here to amuse Miss Knowles ! I must have tired her patience out if she had remained alone.”

“Yes, probably I have amused her,” said Hardyknute, smiling, and thinking a little bitterly of the disconcerted figure that he must have been a minute or two ago.

“Shall I meet you at the Walworths’ to-night, Lady Sarah ?”

"I daresay. We are to be there. To the Park now."

And they drove away. "My dear," said Lady Sarah, when they had gone a few yards, "he has said something to you. I am sure of it. I am not to be deceived in such matters. Is the secret which was no secret out at last?"

"No," said Thyrsa, innocently, "there is no secret disclosed; but Lord Hardyknute was about to tell me of some perplexity on his mind when the carriage was called. But pardon me if I ask about your interview with Lord Nepot. Was it at all successful?"

Lady Sarah Gard looked full in Thyrsa's face, but could read there nothing but a genuine anxiety to hear about the result of her mission. "My dear," said she, "it is a pity that I did not stay ten minutes longer."

"Could you have been more successful if the interview had been longer?"

"No, child. I am not speaking of my visit to Lord Nepot now. Don't you see that Lord Hardyknute was about to make you an offer of marriage when I returned?"

"Lord Hardyknute make *me* an offer?" said Thyrsa, the colour overspreading her neck and her temples.

"Not the least doubt of it. And though he has been balked now, he will be sure to say out his say. I really congratulate you. I am proud of you, my

cousin. You have brought to your feet perhaps the most estimable peer in Great Britain."

"Oh," said Thyrza, "you really must be mistaken," but she said it falteringly. That which she had treated as a silly fancy of Emma Seward's rushed back to her mind. "Lord Hardyknute is entitled to marry one of the greatest ladies in England."

"Granted; but he perversely chooses to marry my handsome cousin. Well, at any rate my interruption of his proposal has gained time to prepare your answer."

"You don't know how unhappy this has made me feel."

"I am sorry for that," answered her ladyship; "but now, to change the subject (if indeed you are able to think of any other), I have brought Lord Nepot to unconditional submission."

"He will obtain Colonel du Lys's reinstatement?" said Thyrza, her eyes brightening, and the momentous pretension of Lord Hardyknute apparently passing from her mind.

"I feel certain that he will. I am glad I saw the necessity of going to him in person. No correspondence could have done it. Nothing but sticking pertinaciously to my point and taking no refusal. He would have escaped by saying that he would certainly ask for what I wanted, but could not undertake to obtain it. But to that I replied that he must obtain it

—that he must proceed exactly as if he were wanting the favour for his own son. He said at last that he would do everything that he could do ; and on that I declared myself satisfied, and said I looked upon the thing as done. As I left him he was laughing broadly, like a conjuror who has been trying his utmost to uphold the mystery and awe of magic, but, finding that nobody is deceived, is amused at his own impudent attempt.”

“Will it be long before he arranges it?”

“I said nothing about time ; but he is in earnest now and will have no object in delaying. On the contrary, as he must do it, he will be inclined to heighten the favour by doing it quickly.”

“It has been so kind of you ; and you have managed so well !”

“You are a strange girl, my dear Thyrsa. You seem more interested in getting Beauclerc du Lys banished to Timbuctoo, or some such place, than in having a coronet laid at your feet.”

Had Thyrsa's bringing up been like that of Lady Sarah Gard, then certainly Thyrsa's present feeling and behaviour would have laid her open to being called a strange girl. But in truth she had heard too little about the advantages of making a good marriage to feel properly in that regard. During her early youth she was working hard, and if matrimony ever

entered into her thoughts at all it appeared there as a change of servitude, as the drudgery of a matron to be substituted for the drudgery of a girl. The idea of altering her social position by marriage was one that had never taken hold of her mind. There could therefore be no surrender of it; and to act in opposition to it cost no effort at all. She followed the bent of her own preference, untroubled by any suggestion of prudence. When du Lys, after their short acquaintance in 1854, went away to the war, she was very doubtful as to whether she should ever see or hear of him again. She had, she could have, no definite hope of ever renewing acquaintance with him, even if he should return safe and be again in her neighbourhood. But for all that, and without looking to any sequel of their companionship, it was her pleasure to set up this idol in her heart, where it was enshrined and where she worshipped it. When these things are considered we need not wonder that the girl, in her uncalculating, unworldly conduct, should appear strange to those who were of the world.

The accession of property to Thyrza's mother, and their unexpected and rather disproportioned ascent in social position, above all the discovery that there was noble blood in her veins, had no doubt given something of a definite outline to Thyrza's hopes. The idol was still for the most part an idol abstracted from

everyday concerns, but she now admitted the thought of du Lys's return, and of their again being known to each other: and we have seen with what dread she expected the opinion that he would form of her, and how earnestly she strove to appear not contemptible in his eyes. Even when she saw his living form, and realised what it was to be in constant intercourse with him on equal terms, her most engrossing thought was not of securing him as a husband, but of preserving to him every excellence that in her mind had ever been ascribed. The possession of him was a good which might or might not come to her, and which could not come but after long patience; but the knowledge that he remained as bright and admirable as she had ever imagined him, she could by no means bear to give up. Thus she was more solicitous about his fame at present than about the exact feeling which he might entertain towards herself. Thyrza could even bear the thought that du Lys might never be hers; but she knew that she would always be his, and in that conviction there was a peace and contentment which satisfied her.

This being the state of her affections, it is not to be wondered at that she was ready to reject any and every amatory advance; and, indeed, that she was so little careful on that head that she did not watch for and did not discern the signs of the admiration which she excited.

Lady Sarah Gard had assured her now that Lord Hardyknute had been on the very point of making her an offer of marriage, and that he would certainly make one explicitly before long. Emma Seward had expected the same occurrence. Thyrza could not therefore doubt that Lord Hardyknute admired her, but the conviction gave her pain rather than pleasure. As to being proud of her conquest—that was a feeling which she did not know; but she did feel acutely the pain of having to refuse a man to whom she felt so much obliged, and who possessed her esteem and that of everybody who knew him. “Oh that he had never set his affections on a poor girl like me!” she said; “how much better if he had chosen a lady of his own rank of whom he could have been proud! And I! what shall I say to him? how put aside his most generous proposal so as not to give offence, and not to be accounted by him ungrateful and capricious?” Thus, what many a young woman would have thought a triumph and a glory, was to Thyrza Knowles a cause of bitter heartache.

That evening Lady Sarah Gard and her young friend were at the party of which Lord Hardyknute had spoken in the morning. His lordship was there, and so was Colonel du Lys. Lady Sarah remarked that really she herself must be the attraction, for although Miss Knowles did not dance, and was therefore the

more at leisure to converse with her friends, yet the young men, notably two of them, seemed to address themselves principally to her.

It was a crowded party, but Lord Hardyknute, as soon as he found Thyrza, came and placed himself by her. She knew that she had a painful ordeal to go through, but she had summoned her native courage to her aid. It is ladies who are going to say "Yes" that tremble at being "put to the question," as if it were the rack itself that was yawning for them. Thyrza's great anxiety was that she might be able to make her refusal so gentle and gracious that she might in no way bruise the feelings of the generous man who would have so distinguished and benefited her.

Somehow Hardyknute seemed to have rather forgotten his suit. He talked, not very collectedly, about indifferent matters, and seemed to eye Lady Sarah Gard with great interest. But her ladyship was then, and for a long time, conversing earnestly with Colonel du Lys, and the length of their conference made him a little impatient.

"What news, may I ask?" said Lady Sarah, after du Lys had addressed a few words to her. "Have you found the people at the Horse Guards more pliant?"

"On the contrary," answered he, "I got what amounted to my *congé* there this morning. One of

the chief functionaries there told me that I had better not trouble myself about coming to the office, that they knew very well how my case stood, and that for the present he could not give me the least hope of success."

"That was most discouraging, certainly; and what do you mean to do now?"

"Well, I am not quite inclined to shoot myself, and what less decided course to take I have not been able to discover."

"Oh, but you will. There are plenty of things to be done. There is Parliament until military prospects improve. Your brother has never chosen to offer himself to a constituency—very unwisely as I think, but he has his own reasons, no doubt—and you are the only other member of the family of an age to sit. I heard only recently that a county seat in the Vert district may very likely be vacant before many weeks have passed."

Du Lys smiled. "I don't think, Lady Sarah, that Parliament would quite suit me just now."

"Then you must farm or travel—anything but be idle. Fortunately you don't require the emoluments of a military appointment. You have plenty of means."

"But pardon me, Lady Sarah," objected he; "though emolument is certainly not a chief object with me, yet

the emoluments of a good appointment would at this time be very acceptable."

"Indeed! I had not supposed anything of the sort."

"It ought not to be so, I know. But you remember that, before the war, I did not live a very penurious life. That, however, was not required of me. I had a profession in which I hoped to rise, and was well enough provided for present needs. But last year, when they were down upon me so sharply, I got reckless and did some silly things in securities, by which I lost money. And, again, when I went on the Continent I played to keep off thought and got heavily hit. I don't know what the end might have been if I hadn't been taken ill."

"I am so delighted at your being confidential," answered Lady Sarah Gard, lowering her voice. "I am your relation, you remember, and you lately did me a most important service. Some little freedom is therefore allowable to me. Oblige me by recollecting that I have a long purse, Beauclerc, and do not hesitate, until your affairs improve, to make me acquainted with your requirements."

"My hearty thanks," said du Lys, gently pressing the hand which lay near to his. "Your kindness is very great; and if I require temporary aid, your offer shall not be forgotten. But I had rather, if it be possible, trust to what I can do for myself. My brother

would be greatly distressed to find that I had accepted aid from any one before himself; and I am sure he is not in a position to make up for the waste of a younger brother."

"That is quite a right sentiment, and I shall say no more at present on the subject of ways and means. I shall, however, remember this conversation, and I hope you will do so also. Now tell me, have you thought seriously of turning to any occupation?"

"I have not, I confess. A long and tedious illness, and other circumstances which I need not name, have caused me to deplore my reckless conduct of a year ago. I have come home resolved not only to commit no more folly, but to be of some use in my generation, and to make up for wasted time. My great desire has been to redeem in the profession of arms my mis-spent years. As that desire has been unsuccessful, I am not ready with any other, for my disappointment is as yet too great to allow me to think calmly."

"Allow me to make two observations. First, your career has not been unsuccessful nor your time wasted. Secondly, you know that in these matters, which depend so much on influence, the temper of officials may be changed very suddenly."

"My military career, Lady Sarah, *was* unsuccessful inasmuch as it was guided by no clear perception of its duties. Any Englishman will fight when you

put him face to face with an enemy, and I am ashamed to say that I had little notion of doing anything more ; while by silly disputes and quibblings about matters of duty I caused trouble and annoyance, of which I am now ashamed. I wanted to recommence and to be a soldier in earnest—a thinking, working soldier.”

“Even an old woman understands that our famous soldiers have been something more than valorous combatants—that they have become great, more by intelligence and thought and the exercise of powers of the mind than by mere bodily prowess.”

“But every young officer does not know it ; or if he knows it, does not reflect on it. I have begun to think, and I long much to practise what I have been studying.”

“I wish sincerely that you may have the opportunity.”

“Thanks. I have been monopolising your ladyship unwarrantably. There is Hardyknute approaching again, and seeming to wonder when I may give him an opportunity of sitting near you. I will withdraw.”

While the above conversation had been proceeding, Lord Hardyknute, unusually *distracted* and restless, had left Miss Knowles and gone in quest of he knew not what through the rooms. He had been fretted at seeing that du Lys did not move, and he could not bear to

stand longer watching. After he left her, Thyrza had gone with Miss Seward into a distant apartment, where they had much to say to each other, as they found. Du Lys, who had been much depressed, endeavoured now to raise his spirits by acting the part of a very animated man and exchanging a few cheerful remarks with many of his acquaintances.

"I have been watching to see you disengaged, Lady Sarah," said Lord Hardyknute. "I want to speak half-a-dozen serious words to you, if you allow me."

"I am quite at your service. Will you take this seat while it is yet disposable?"

"I will, and thank you too. You must know, Lady Sarah, that I am in a state of great perplexity."

"It pains me to hear you say so. What has happened?"

"Nothing has happened, and that is why I am perplexed," answered he, making a small attempt at being jocular now that he believed some relief for his mind to be at hand.

"Explain, please."

"I tell you in confidence that I have all but proposed to your friend Miss Knowles."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. And although I should not, of course, expect her to reply to a hint, or to meet me half-way in such a matter, there is a distinction between maidenly

reserve and utter unconsciousness and indifference. It seems to me that Miss Knowles neither knows nor desires to recognise what, I am sure, must have been plain enough for long to your discernment, that I am most anxious for a little encouragement from her."

"Right. I have seen your attentions, no doubt."

"Well, Lady Sarah, I suppose that I am not a practised enough ladies' man, and that I do not go about my business discreetly. Miss Knowles's general behaviour to me is gracious, appreciative, indeed everything that I could desire; and yet when I make pointed, and as I should think unmistakable, advances, I find her as unmoved as if I spoke of the weather or the wane of the season."

"It would be worse if she frowned, would it not?"

"I don't know. It would be very bad, but I could understand it. She doesn't frown. I often presume to think that she likes my company—likes *me*. But I cannot elicit the least sign of consciousness when I attempt to show her the state of my feelings."

"She is very simple. Possibly she does not understand parables," said Lady Sarah.

"Pardon me. She is very simple in the sense of being very candid and unaffected; but she is as quick as lightning where she chooses to give her mind; and as to feeling, I know that she can be most affectionate."

"Yes, I think you are right."

“Well then, as I said, I am greatly perplexed and harassed. I fear the very worst issue to my suit ; and yet there are times when she seems to regard me with something more flattering than indifference or even cold esteem. Would you, Lady Sarah, who are probably well aware of the state of her feelings—would you take pity on me, and say whether I may hope to prosper, or whether the case is absolutely hopeless?”

“You give me credit, Lord Hardyknute, for knowledge which I do not possess. I have, of course, observed your attentions to Miss Knowles, and how they have increased of late ; but I assure you that she has never offered me any information as to the state of her heart, and that I have never asked for any. This much, I think, I can tell you, that until to-day Miss Knowles did not believe that you addressed her as a lover. I think she does now understand, but how she is disposed to deal with your petition I am entirely ignorant. You have my best wishes ; I cannot say more.”

“And you my best gratitude for the same. But would it be too bold a request, Lady Sarah, if I were to ask you to sound the young lady on the subject on my behalf, so that I might judge whether I should at once try my fortune, or whether my chance would be improved by waiting?”

“I cannot say that I should at all like to speak to her on the subject, unless she were to give me a plain

opening, which I do not think probable; and if I were to interfere against my judgment and my inclination I should most likely prove a bungling negotiator. No, Lord Hardyknute, try for yourself. I do not think you need observe times and seasons, and I *do* think that whenever you may put a plain question you will get an unequivocal answer."

"Then I must make the plunge without delay. Bad as suspense is, it is a pain to end it when it may be exchanged for despair. In a day or two you will see me the happiest or most miserable of men."

As has been said, Miss Seward and Miss Knowles had retired to an apartment visited by very few of the company, where, therefore, they could converse without much danger of interruption. Emma, not being in robust health, was soon weary of dancing, and she had entreated Thyrza to retire with her, that she might get a rest, and that they might compare notes concerning some matters belonging to the Vert district, from which they had been for a long time absent. There were schools, and Church matters, and charities, and some little changes which had occurred during the summer to be talked over. But the conversation somehow soon got away from these subjects, and turned to others wherein the two ladies were personally interested. A mention of the Tower of Lys gave Miss Seward an opportunity of saying abruptly—

"By the way, I hear that Colonel du Lys has been disappointed in the result of an application which he made for employment."

"Yes, he has been disappointed. He told me so himself. I am so concerned about it."

"But do you know that if he succeeded he might be obliged to go abroad—perhaps half round the globe, and for years?"

"Yes," said Thyrza, quietly, "I know he might."

"And you say you are concerned about his failing to get it?"

"Certainly. But let me say to you in confidence, my dear—mind this is strictly between ourselves—that I think he will get employment—I can't tell where—after all. That is why I speak so calmly about it."

Emma looked straight into Thyrza's countenance for some explanation of all this. She had made up her mind that du Lys was the person intended by Thyrza to whom she would say "Yes." And now Thyrza appeared only anxious to get him despatched somewhere on service. So firmly had she believed that du Lys was the person foremost in Thyrza's thoughts, that she had looked upon his reappearance in London as a singular piece of good fortune to herself, sure to have the effect of confirming Thyrza's resolve to refuse Hardyknute. But du Lys, she thought now, could

not possibly be the favoured person ; she had now only Thyrza's promise and resolution to trust to. She did not doubt Thyrza's loyalty, but she thought Hardyknute's solicitation might cruelly try a heart not fortified by the presence of a counteracting power. Her hopes and fears started up alarmed, and she said—

“ And, Thyrza, has the thing happened of which I spoke to you ? You know. Lord Hardyknute—has he proposed to you ? ”

“ No,” said Thyrza, “ I don't think he has.”

“ Why, you are all enigmas to -night,” observed Emma, reproachfully. “ What can you mean by you don't think he has ? Don't you know ? ”

“ Well, no, he has not. Only he did say something to-day which I did not understand ; but Lady Sarah says it meant that he was going to propose.”

“ Oh, Thyrza, and if he does—you will keep your promise ? ”

“ Assuredly I will keep my promise. Why do you doubt ? ”

“ Oh, pardon me. I do not doubt. Only I thought that if your heart is free you might repent—that you might be persuaded—oh, I can't tell what I thought.”

“ But I couldn't marry Lord Hardyknute. I told you so.”

“ You did, my dear. But I am, oh, so nervous, and so wretched.”

Thyrza took Emma's hand and held it. "I wish I could relieve your mind," she said; "but be brave and patient, and it may be that things will come right."

Emma returned the pressure of Thyrza's hand. "You are making an immense sacrifice for me," she said.

"No," answered Thyrza, "I am making no sacrifice. I am acting according to my own wish, and doing what I believe to be right. Come; you will only become more sad sitting in the corner here. Let us go among the gay people."

CHAPTER XVII.

LOVE FOR LOVE—DESPAIR.

EARLY next day Lord Hardyknute was announced to Lady Sarah Gard and Miss Knowles. He was very sober—almost sad, and had very little to speak about. The ladies were obliged to suggest topics of conversation; but even when the lead was given him his lordship flagged in his remarks. Epsom and Ascot did not rouse him; the coming prorogation drew from him three monosyllables; a question about his plans for the autumn made him stare like one suddenly awakened. He had no plan, and seemed astonished that any one should fancy that he had. Three times he said that the weather was very warm, and twice that two members of the House of Commons had died. On the second time of stating the latter fact, he added that we should all have to go the same road, and he really looked as if he did not much care how soon he set out.

Lady Sarah Gard perceived his distress, and was devising an excuse for withdrawing, when a large square letter was handed to her, on the left-hand corner of which she traced the name "Nepot," in not over-legible characters.

"This, I know, refers to business of importance," said her ladyship. "I will ask leave to retire for a few minutes, as it may be necessary I should take some step immediately."

No sooner had the door closed after her than Lord Hardyknute, suddenly recovering animation, drew his chair close to Thyrza, and said—

"It was you, yourself, Miss Knowles, who told me that I could achieve the difficult. I am sure you are not one to give encouragement where you intend to be cruel, and I venture to think that your words had a gracious meaning."

"There was no meaning in my words beyond what they expressed. I meant to say that you would not be easily daunted, but I did not mean to encourage you to any particular undertaking."

"I will test my power of achievement at once. I have come to say what I hoped you had learned from signs which I did not attempt to make equivocal. My admiration of you, let me say my affection for you, has not been disguised. Hear me say in plain terms that I love you passionately. Can you, will you, ac-

cept my devotion, my homage ; and will you deign to say that you regard my suit with favour ? ”

“ Oh, Lord Hardyknute,” answered Thyrza, “ your words have made me very unhappy. It is so unfortunate that you should have distinguished me as you say. I would never from choice have done or said anything that could give you a moment’s pain or annoyance. I only wish I could make you understand how grateful I am for all your kindness and condescension.”

“ Accept me for your husband, and you will not only cancel what you are pleased to call kindness, but make me infinitely your debtor.”

“ I must be very frank with you, although it gives me pain to be so. I do not love you as a wife ought to love her husband.”

“ You do not *dislike* me, I venture to hope. If you would but accept *my* love, I will trust to the devotion of myself and all that is mine to your service, to inspire you with the tenderer feeling which, as yet, I have not had the good fortune to raise.”

“ No, certainly I do not dislike you. I should be a wretch if I did. But I cannot marry you. I do not think I shall marry anybody.”

“ Will you take a little time to consider my proposal ? Do not, for pity’s sake, break a heart which is devoted to you.”

"No, it would be wicked not to speak plainly where I have no doubt of my own mind. I must decline, and I am so wretched."

"I will not now cease to hope, Miss Knowles. I will try yet whether you will be proof against such constancy as mine will be."

"Yes, you *must* cease to hope," said Thyrza. "But do not, I beseech you, think ill of me or be angry with me. I cannot bear the thought of offending you."

"Nay, you cannot offend me," said Hardyknute. "I know you are acting like a good and true woman who can see that matrimony is not a state to be lightly entered into. I only love you the more for your conscientiousness."

"You will find a wife far more worthy of you than I could ever be. Recollect how mean I was when you first knew me, which is not so long ago. Think that I held your horse for you."

"Oh, the thought of it would be charming if only I could call you mine. You did only what, I doubt not, many a noble ancestress of yours has done and thought it no shame, but a glory. I do not even now—though I will never annoy you with my solicitations—I do not absolutely resign my pretension. I will wait to see if Fortune will befriend me," said he, rising. Then, with a sickly smile, "I am too entirely a Saxon. I ought to mate with a Norman damsel. And that

which is fitting, as well as my dearest wish, I trust my good genius will aid me in achieving."

He took Thyrza's hand, raised it to his lips, and having given her a look from his blue eyes, in which beamed all the tenderness of his honest heart, he turned and left her. Poor Thyrza! she had done her part bravely, but now that it was played, she was fain to rush away to her chamber that she might weep there.

She reappeared a little before the time when Lady Sarah Gard usually went abroad, traces of her emotion being pretty well effaced. Her ladyship asked no question, but awaited whatever confidence Thyrza might be pleased to give her. And this patience was a little hard. She fully expected to have been informed by Thyrza, with sparkling eyes and a heightened colour, that she had consented to become Lady Hardyknute, and to share a large fortune with one of the best men in the world. She saw now no sign of a happy *fiancée*—only a grave face, unusually pale, and with something like the traces of tears. It cannot be denied that she was curious to know what had happened; but she could control curiosity, and did so. Seeing that Thyrza did not speak, she with much good taste began to mention a matter foreign to that which she would fain have discussed.

"Lord Nepot has kept his word," said she. "And

he has had the gallantry not to keep me long waiting for the report of his proceedings."

"What! has he taken the ban off Colonel du Lys?" asked Thyrza, her eyes growing brighter and her colour returning.

"He has. And though I do not exactly understand what is to be done, I see the result is to be that Beauclerc is to have command of a regiment abroad. He is to present himself again at the Horse Guards in a day or two, and there he will receive a full explanation of what it is intended to do on his behalf."

Thyrza went to Lady Sarah and kissed her. "You *have* been kind," said she, "and have shown yourself a better mediator than all his friends together. Does he know yet of the thawing of this official iceberg?"

"I think not. The letter you saw was from Earl Nepot, and I have taken no step since I received it."

"You will tell him?"

"Unless you will. You know, Thyrza, it was your suggestion entirely which made me think of going to this minister, and du Lys owes it to you, in the first instance, that the affair has been managed. We shall be sure to meet him to-night. Would you like to tell him yourself?"

"Yes, I think I should," answered Thyrza. "It is very kind of your ladyship to consider me in the matter."

“A strange girl, truly!” thought Lady Sarah. “Getting Beauclerc du Lys sent away from her takes more hold of her mind than the offer of a coronet. She seems to have forgotten all about Hardyknute.”

Which was for the minute true. Thyrza had never set herself to bring Lord Hardyknute to her feet, and she had with all her heart desired that du Lys should be fully restored to his profession.

As Lady Sarah Gard had expected, du Lys was at the party to which they went that evening, and did not fail to come up and greet them before they had been long there. Lady Sarah soon found some earnest matter to talk over with a friend on her right, and Thyrza thereupon engaged du Lys in conversation. Ere long, Miss Knowles took occasion to say—

“I fear it will pain you if I ask whether your military prospects look any brighter, but not to ask might signify an indifference which I don’t feel.”

“You are very kind,” said du Lys, “but I have made no further effort in that direction. The case is only too decidedly hopeless.”

“But you will banish it from your mind. You will think of other things, and follow other pursuits. We must all bear disappointments.”

“Easily said. But you don’t know, Miss Knowles, how this failure weighs upon my mind. If it were only some passing fancy, some eccentric ambition that

was foiled, I hope I could act as you suggest ; but it is the plan of my whole future that is shattered—it is the chance of redeeming a useless past that is denied me. Just as I begin to understand in what the pride of a military career should consist I am shut off from all chance of fulfilling one.”

“I rejoice to hear you speak thus. It is the way in which you ought to speak and to feel. And now for the announcement to which my former remark was intended to lead. If, as the advertisements say, you call again at the Horse Guards in a day or two, you will probably hear of something to your advantage.”

“I am sure you would not trifle with me on such a subject.”

“Assuredly not. It is as I have said. I believe something acceptable is designed for you, but I shall probably blunder if I attempt to tell you what.”

“And you have been able to turn the hearts of these flinty officials?”

“No, not I ; but Lady Sarah Gard has fought and conquered for you. I know not whether she would choose to have it known by what agency she has compelled a favourable consideration of your case.”

“But it was you who moved Lady Sarah to exert herself, was it not? I remember your asking me whether I would object to a lady’s interference on my behalf.”

“Well, in a way I originated the idea, but it was her ladyship who hit on the right interest, and who laboured personally to set it in motion.”

“You have done me an immense service—you know that you have. When every resource that I could command had failed you stepped in and won with ease. I am heartily grateful. I am proud to be indebted to you. I could—— What a lucky man Hardyknute is!”

“It is your luck that I am thinking most of at present. Now will you not go and thank Lady Sarah? She will be aware that I have told you. You will let us know how it is all to work out after you have been at the Horse Guards, will you not?”

“Yes, I will talk the whole matter over with my best friends.”

It is needless to repeat the whole of what was said between du Lys and Lady Sarah Gard. Her ladyship gave full credit to Thyrsa for the suggestion of using ministerial influence, and let du Lys see how anxious she (Thyrsa) had been on his behalf. “If,” said she, “the employment which Miss Knowles has been so set upon getting for you had not been likely to separate you from her, I should imagine that you, and not Lord Hardyknute, were in reality the favoured lover.”

“Hardyknute would have been a formidable rival even if I had been earlier in the field ; but he, having such a start of me, and all appliances and means to boot, could not help winning. Is anything settled about their marriage, do you know?”

“Nothing, as far as I am aware.”

“I sincerely like them both, and trust that they may be happy : indeed I am sure they will.”

Du Lys had been principally occupied since his return to London in endeavours to procure military employment ; but while a man is young and healthy he will rarely be so absorbed in serious business, however important it may be, as to exclude from his breast all softer emotions—he will hardly be so *distract* as once was the gallant Hotspur, if we may believe his wife.

“Tell me, sweet lord, what is’t that takes from thee
Thy stomach, pleasure, and thy golden sleep ?
Why dost thou bend thine eyes upon the earth,
And start so often when thou sitt’st alone ?
Why hast thou lost the fresh blood in thy cheeks,
And given my treasures, and my rights of thee,
To thick-eyed musing, and curs’d melancholy ?”

No ; it is the privilege of youth that it generally can slip away by times from gnawing care or engrossing enterprise, just to look into the sunny realm where pleasure is lord, and where bright alluring forms and ideas invite the soul to come and be lapped in Elysium. The

case to be excepted is that wherein love himself has turned tormentor: then, till the spirit be exorcised, the sea is without shore, and “no light, but rather darkness visible, serves only to discover scenes of woe.” But love was not at present du Lys’s ruling power, and so his mind made excursions into the purple light, and, in spite of the stern resolution to which we saw him come, he would frequently imagine the captivating form and features of Thyrza Knowles lit up by the warm effulgence. When she expressed so frankly and so earnestly her wishes for his success, some days ago, he had thought that there never was such a fascinating girl in the world, and now that she had been the messenger of good news to him he might have been betrayed into saying something very affectionate but for the rights of Hardyknute, which he would rigidly respect. Thyrza, however, was mixed up in his thoughts with his improved fortunes; he scarcely thought of one without the other; and he had difficulty in suppressing a desire to tell her all that was in his heart.

The morning after Miss Knowles had told du Lys what to expect, he received a note from an eminent official at the Horse Guards who was anxious to see him—the same, by the way, who had so churlishly advised him not to come there again, and who had told him that all chance of employment for him was at an

end. Du Lys went to him, and it was beautiful to witness the simple, honest delight with which the great officer announced that they had unexpectedly found it practicable to make an arrangement whereby du Lys might be once more employed, and in a manner such as they understood that he desired. A lieutenant-colonel of a regiment (the Browns) serving in India, could not remain there by reason of failing health. He was an officer entitled to consideration, and as he wished to exchange to a position of less responsibility, but still a full-pay appointment, it had been decided to allow him to exchange into one of the regiments of Household troops. At present there was no officer of the Guards desirous of exchanging; but a lieutenant-colonel and captain was about to be appointed to the Staff, which would make him supernumerary, and it was thought that if du Lys were brought back to full pay into the vacancy so created, he might be willing to exchange with the colonel of the Browns, it being then one of the privileges of the Foot Guards that the commissions of their lieutenant-colonels and captains were exchangeable with those of regimental lieutenant-colonels of the line. This arrangement was all that du Lys wished, and more than he hoped for. He accepted the offer as gratefully as if the goodwill of the officer who proposed it had been sincere, and as if nothing had been known of the pressure which had been put on the office. He had

been willing to go on the Staff, but the command of a regiment (more especially of a fighting regiment like the Browns) was far more to his mind; and that the regiment happened to be serving in India was hardly a drawback.

He left the Horse Guards exulting in the thought that his eclipse was over, that he had recovered his position in the service, and that there was now open to him a career of responsibility and usefulness. He went straight to tell Lady Sarah Gard of the eminently satisfactory proposal which had been made to him, and of his having accepted it. Lady Sarah had not yet made her appearance, but he was, as on a former occasion, received by Miss Knowles.

“I have called to say,” he began, “that my fortune is even better than you led me to expect. I am to go to India to command a regiment as soon as arrangements can be completed. Forgetting, so eager was I to make my acknowledgments, that the hour is rather early for a visit, I came hither straight from the Horse Guards to thank Lady Sarah Gard and yourself for your most successful exertions on my behalf.”

“I am delighted,” answered Thyrsa, “that it has all turned out so well. You will go now and earn, I am sure, farther distinction, and we shall see you coming home again after a while, in favour at the Horse

Guards, instead of under a cloud. Oh, it makes me so happy."

"Thank you from my heart. If ever I do come back I hope it will be to find you settled in the midst of every happiness. Is there a chance of my seeing Lady Sarah if I wait?"

"I do not think she will be visible for an hour. But you are not obliged on that account to take flight at once. Will you not tell me something about your new position, and whether the place you will have to go to in India is pleasant and healthy, and when they will let you come back again?"

Du Lys would have liked nothing better than to improve the occasion by having an hour's conversation with Thyrza; but Hardyknute might justly take exception to his doing so, and he would not, therefore, accept the invitation which she, simple and innocent of evil intention, had given.

"I have not yet told my brother and sister," said he, "of my improved prospects. And there is business to be done in reference to my exchange, which I must set about immediately. I shall have the pleasure of waiting on Lady Sarah Gard at a more seasonable hour, and then we will speak fully of my new way of life."

The smile passed away from Thyrza's face, and there was a little tremor in her eyelids. "Well, another time, then," said she in very low tones.

Du Lys felt cut to the heart. She thought him ungrateful, unfriendly, he supposed ; while in truth his heart was overflowing with gratitude—with something more than that, if he had understood his own feelings. It was an exceedingly difficult position. He must sternly put an end to the interview, but he could not go without saying a short sentence to assure her how highly he prized her kindness. He had already risen. He now went to Thyrza and took her hand.

“I am compelled to go. If I could follow my inclination, there is nothing I would more gladly do than stay and speak of my coming duty. Believe this, dear Thyrza, and pardon my seeming abruptness.” He turned to go.

“You have called me Thyrza again,” said she. “I will forgive you much for that.” This arrested his departure.

“I did call you by your name to convince you if I could that I am neither cold nor ungrateful. But forgive me if I say to you that, your position being what it is, I should act very improperly if I were so to address you usually.”

“Then I had better have remained a peasant in the Vert fields if this is to be the effect of my position, as you call it. You were never formal there.”

She turned her face away: not so quickly but that du Lys saw a tear on her cheek.

"Nay," said he, softly. "In the Vert fields or anywhere else I should be bound to act the same. I did not mean your position in society, but the relation in which you stand to another person."

"What can you mean?" asked Thyrza, forgetting in her earnestness that her countenance was to be concealed.

"Of course I mean that it would not be agreeable to Lord Hardyknute that I should address you by your Christian name."

"I have known you longer than I have known Lord Hardyknute," sobbed Thyrza, who no more tried to conceal her emotion. "I can't think why he should come between us, and I am sure he wouldn't."

"One word," said du Lys, taking her hand again. "I understood—I believe all the world understands—that you are to be Lord Hardyknute's wife."

"No, it is not true," said Thyrza, speaking vehemently, but not finding voice enough to speak loudly. "I am not to be Lord Hardyknute's wife, nor any one's wife."

"You are not under any engagement? You stand here perfectly mistress of your own hand?"

"Undoubtedly I do."

"Oh, Thyrza," he said, in a low voice, something above a whisper, "I have been longing to speak to you as I used to speak of old, but my honour held

me silent. I have thought of you when I was far away; on the battle plains by night: in my sick chamber: and tossing on the ocean. On the very evening of the fire I had been thinking of you, and of when I might be able to go down to the Vert and know what had befallen you. Then I met you by a romantic chance; and almost at the same time I learned that you were betrothed, or as good as betrothed, to Lord Hardyknute."

"It was a shame! It was not true!"

"I will tell you something that *is* true, Thyrza. I love you. I always shall. I feel that I always did."

She stood drinking in the words, making no answer, but not withdrawing from her position.

"Thyrza, are you listening to me? Can you return my love?"

"Yes."

"Are you sure of your feelings? Have you cared for me before to-day?"

"Yes."

"For how long?"

"Ever since I have known you."

"You are the dearest girl in the world."

"Let me go now."

"No, I will tell you about India. Dear Thyrza, will you go with me to India?"

"No."

"No! And yet you say you love me?"

"I cannot go to India. You must go alone."

"You will not be my wife?"

"Not now. Not till you are once more on the road to distinction."

"How! I must wait for years; leave you exposed to the addresses of a hundred admirers; and probably lose you at last!"

"No, you will not lose me."

"But think, Thyrza, what a long, cruel engagement."

"There is no engagement at all. I said you should not lose *me*. I did not say that I would hold you bound."

"But will you not hear reason, Thyrza? You cannot have reflected on what you are saying."

"I will hear reason," answered Thyrza, recovering a little from the shock of her delight. "You must go to your duty unencumbered with a wife, and think only of making yourself a name. When that is done, and you come back, as so many a du Lys has come, with honour won, then if you still wish to make such a request as you have now made, I will listen to you."

"Well, I am not going immediately. We shall, I hope, spend many hours together before I leave. And you have said you will hear reason."

"Yes, I will hear reason; but I must go now."

A few more last words and they parted, supremely happy.

It may have been gathered from what has from time to time been stated in this narrative, that Colonel du Lys had never at any time till now entertained the idea of marrying Thyrza Knowles. When he went to the Crimea she was a villager. When he returned from the Continent he, to his surprise, found her in the midst of gay and fashionable society. He felt then that he must order his conduct towards her according to some fixed intention ; and he was very honestly setting about the search for information which might reasonably be required in such circumstances, when he learned that Lord Hardyknute was already Thyrza's favoured suitor. This knowledge, while it showed him that he might save himself the trouble of making inquiries, at the same time gave a summary answer to inquiries of that sort. Lord Hardyknute, who had means of knowing Thyrza's history, had not hesitated to ask her to become his wife. He was not a man to act from caprice in such a matter. No man had more consideration for the feelings of his family, and no man was less likely to be captivated by a fine face and form, if these gifts were not accompanied by a mind and disposition which he could approve. Hardyknute's choice of her was a certificate that Thyrza was entitled to mate with the very

best. Thus, at the same time, when du Lys learned that Thyrza was bespoken, he learned also that he had missed a very excellent and admirable woman by the merest chance; "for," thought he, "I feel sure the girl liked me once; she doesn't prefer Hardyknute because of his rank or wealth, I am quite certain; and therefore if I had only been a little earlier in the field, I might have carried her off from all comers."

After he had philosophically dismissed Thyrza from his mind, as a prize which was no longer in the market, du Lys could not prevent this thought of what might have been from sometimes intruding and gaining a tolerably firm footing there; and then the undisguised favour which she had lately shown to him, notwithstanding that he set it down to gratitude and simplicity, was very trying. Thyrza Knowles was a radiance about whom it was unsafe to flutter at all: to flutter near her and attract rays from her glory was captivity. The quiet and evidently sincere interest which she expressed concerning his employment was agreeable in the extreme; and her look and manner, when she was doing a kindness, exercised a power which was not always apparent, but which was keenly perceptible to those whom she chose to honour by her sympathy. Most observers would have described Thyrza's charms as commanding; but they

who tasted her favour felt that their open assault upon the heart was but a light thing in comparison of the stealthy entrance which they could effect like the most subtile of nature's powers, securing the citadel ere it was perceived that an outwork had fallen.

At the time when Thyrza asked du Lys whether he would accept a lady's advocacy, although he thought that she was prompted by simple enthusiasm, and that she was not likely to succeed where many forces known to be potent had failed, yet he was bewitched by her manner of making the proposal, remembered her looks and words, and involuntarily turned them in his mind by night and by day. Again, there was something unusually winning in her little judgments of his conduct. Few would have thought of criticising it; from fewer still would the proud du Lys have borne approbation or censure; but Thyrza's words, as if armed with a talisman or a spell, passed the haughty gates, and sunk as pleasant songs into his soul.

Du Lys's passion was not much mitigated by Thyrza's announcement to him of his employment having been at length procured. He had not been trying to mitigate it lately; it was a secret pleasure, and could never be anything better, why then might he not enjoy it in secret, seeing that there was a barrier which shut him out from her love? Let any one remembering this judge of his feeling when he learned

suddenly that the barrier did not exist—that Thyrza, lovely, soft, yielding, was standing before him free to be wooed.

Reasons have been shown why du Lys had never distinctly contemplated marrying Thyrza. Yet without previous clear intention he had now made her an offer. There can be no doubt that he was very deeply in love with her, and he rejoiced now in the love of the handsomest woman he had ever seen. Thyrza's descent was good enough to satisfy his brother, and Thyrza did as much credit to her blood as her blood did to her. So far there was every reason to be satisfied with the course which he had taken. As regarded fortune, Thyrza was not so well off as many a maiden to whose hand he might have aspired; but he had never set his mind much upon fortune, and now that he was to become a working soldier, fortune was of less account than if he had been destined to live among his rich friends. If the match had been less eligible than it was, he could not have helped declaring himself to Thyrza, and so he had every reason to congratulate himself that it was in most respects so suitable.

He had now a great deal to do besides making love, but the thought of his having won Thyrza made professional business light and easy. At the Horse Guards he was once more on his old footing, and

while he was there watching the progress of his own affairs he talked as in former days to all the Staff people, and discussed with them the military incidents of the day. Buffer, himself a Guardsman, had been a friend of du Lys for many years; and he was glad when he could resume free intercourse with his old acquaintance without laying himself open to the suspicion of departmental *lèse-majesté*. One day du Lys went into Buffer's room to ascertain some particulars concerning the regiment which he hoped to command, and while they were turning over files of old documents, Buffer remarked—

“By the by, did you ever know anything of that curious old fellow, Warner, in the Crimea?”

“You mean Colonel Warner, I suppose. Yes, I knew him. Saw a good deal of him while I was sick. Shocking old sinner, I believe.”

“So every fellow says that ever heard of him. Seems no great credit to the service; and to owe to it a deuced deal more than it owes to him. Yet he's pushing along somehow or other an application for Staff employment, which seems to gather strength as it rolls.”

“Really! who are his friends?”

“Devil a soul that I know of. Nobody'll say a word in his favour, but directly we talk of cushioning the whole matter somebody says that he's very badly

off, that he is very obliging, never hurt anybody, and so on. Now it appears that he's suffered dreadful loss through a fire; and papers have been burned which would have insured him some appointment."

"He's making a good deal out of that bottle of brandy and the greasy old wrapper," *thought* du Lys. He *said*, "Well, the fire isn't an invention, I can assure you. It was the same that I was lucky enough to get my relative Lady Sarah Gard out of. Warner was lodging below her. I know that his room was on fire; was in it after the occurrence; know, too, that many of his papers were burned."

"Ah, just so. That's it, you see. One gives him a lift one way and one another. You've established this case of the fire. We shall have to find something for him. Is he suited for active Staff duties, do you think?"

"Well, no; not for *very* active duties, I should say. A quiet garrison place where there's only humdrum routine that his clerk can do would be best."

"Then if he's a restless, meddling fellow, you know, a good clerk won't stand it."

"But he isn't; he'll never interfere with the clerk if the clerk doesn't interfere with him, I'll answer for it."

"Well, then, he has negative good qualities. Is there anything he's more likely to take kindly to than another?"

“Undiluted brandy and tobacco are most in his line. Where these abound, and a little three-card loo is obtainable, he’ll accept any responsibility whatever.”

“After all, I think we had better keep clear of him; he’s evidently a black sheep.”

“No doubt about it.”

“Then we’ll just let him go to the devil.”

“Poor old beggar!”

“Well, I’ll send this thing on to Drawle; I’ll be hanged if I know what to do with him.”

Du Lys foresaw that Wiggy, after his papers should have travelled about the offices for another month or so, would probably pick up something snug if his works didn’t run down in the meantime.

Lord Hardyknute was not seen anywhere for some days. His cousin, Miss Seward, had a suspicion of what had happened to him, and had fear lest disappointment should have brought on an illness—or even worse than that; for Emma, weak and nervous, admitted ideas that were not very reasonable. She told her father that something must be wrong; but the baronet, who was not in love with him, treated his disappearance very coolly, saying, “Oh, he’s off on some whim or other; he’d have told us if anything had been the matter.” But at last Emma’s alarm was great, and Sir Eldred, seeing that she was out of sorts, and could not be reasoned with, at last went off to

beat him up. When he saw Hardyknute his heart smote him for his incredulity, for in truth the peer was about as miserable as he was capable of being. He had shut himself up, had withdrawn himself from Parliament, from his clubs, from his friends, from what had been his pleasures. He lay on a sofa in his dressing-gown, his appearance much neglected, with the evidence of severe suffering in his features and his general aspect. Letters were lying about him, some unopened, and others confusedly scattered as if they had been opened and tossed aside. All sorts of persons who had called on what might at another time have been considered important business, had been refused admittance to him. His gentleman had hinted at sending for a medical man, but he had positively forbidden the taking of any such step.

Sir Eldred Seward was informed, as other people had been, that his lordship was much indisposed and could not see anybody; but he sent for his lordship's own man and demanded to know what was the matter. The latter testified great joy at seeing Sir Eldred, and besought the baronet to go in without the ceremony of asking for admission, saying that he knew not what was wrong, but that everything had an unusual appearance; that he had himself wished to have a physician summoned, but that his lordship had obstinately refused to see one. Sir Eldred Seward thought that

he might take the liberty of breaking through the prohibition against visitors, and he accordingly invaded Lord Hardyknute's retreat. The recluse threw down a book when he heard the door open, and turning round a haggard face, greeted the baronet, and languidly held out his hand.

"Hardyknute, I fear that you are ill. I had not seen you for long myself, and I could get no account of you from anybody, so I have come to see after your condition."

"You are very good, Sir Eldred. I am somewhat out of sorts, but I think I shall be right again after a little time. There is nothing to be alarmed about."

"I am glad to hear that. Am I right in supposing that your health has given way?"

"Yes, you are. But as I know the cause of my complaint, and I don't think anybody could suggest a remedy, I must just bear it." And he heaved a deep sigh, and a woe-begone expression possessed his countenance.

"Some loss or annoyance, perhaps?"

"Loss, yes; annoyance—as I live, it's worse than annoyance—it's misery, misery. I thought I had a stronger mind. I didn't think a disappointment could have bruised me so cruelly."

Sir Eldred Seward had heard of no contretemps of

any kind, and could not imagine what Lord Hardyknute meant. He felt certain that he had not been aspiring to political honours, and concluded that this must be some racing misfortune. "Is it possible," said he, "that you have been hard hit on the turf?"

"The turf!" echoed Lord Hardyknute, raising himself to his elbow in his vehemence, "by Heaven, if the loss of all I have in the world on the turf could free me from the pangs that I suffer day and night, I could see it all go with delight. No, it is in my affections that I suffer. My whole being is blighted. It's misery—I tell you it's misery!" and he sank down again on the sofa, groaning.

"Egad, he's in love," thought the baronet, immensely relieved by the idea; and he quietly took up the book which his connection had thrown down—an action unseen by the latter, as his head was buried in a cushion and he was writhing in a burst of grief. 'The Poems of William Shenstone' he read on the title-page; and the book opened of itself at the sweetest of all pastorals, where the division headed "Disappointment" was scored with a pencil, and great dashes of black-lead flanked the early verses.

"Ye shepherds ! give ear to my lay,
And take no more heed of my sheep;
They have nothing to do but to stray,
I have nothing to do but to weep.

Yet do not my folly reprove ;
She was fair—and my passion begun ;
She smiled—and I could not but love ;
She is faithless—and I am undone."

"That's it, sure enough," farther thought Sir Eldred when he saw these evidences. "Shenstone's the very bard to whom I should have expected him to turn for sympathy. He isn't mad enough for Byron's flights, nor sufficiently frivolous for Tommy Moore's lyrics. Wanted an honest, heartfelt love-burst that could tell him what he felt. Poor fellow! It seems a bad case."

"Sir Eldred," said the patient, turning his countenance once again to the light, "for more than a twelvemonth I've been hoping to marry that woman. Every ambition, every plan, every thought of my future——"

"What woman, my dear fellow?" interrupted the baronet, not without a recollection of remarks made by his daughter to him, to which he had never given serious consideration. "You haven't told me her name."

"I thought you knew; I thought everybody knew. 'Tisn't that I care for. They may all know what has happened to me. It is losing the girl herself that I cannot bear."

"Am I right in supposing that Miss Knowles has refused you?"

"Only too horribly true."

"She can't have reflected on what she was doing."

"Yes, she has. And she spoke so kindly and so sensibly about it. Her disinterestedness only makes me love her the more. Unlucky wretch that I am!"

"Must be another lover in the case," thought Sir Eldred. "She wouldn't have been such a fool else."

"You don't think she'll relent, Hardyknute?"

"Would to heaven I could think so! No, she dismissed me as gently as an angel, but very decidedly. I told her I would never give her up. But what good is there in my saying that?"

"I am very sorry to find you so distressed. But, you know, Hardyknute, solitude isn't good for your complaint. Besides, you have been shut up now three, four—I don't know how many days. You want air and exercise, and, above all, companionship."

"I haven't been entirely shut up. I've been out when nobody could see me—in the night, you know. I can't bear the daylight, and I feel that I couldn't face company—literally couldn't do it."

"Excuse me if I say the moon doesn't help men in your condition. I would not be cruel enough to prescribe 'company' for you at present; but I think if you would bear the society of your own relatives for a while now and then, it might do you good."

Lord Hardyknute groaned aloud.

“ Will you come to us in the afternoon? I will call for you if you allow it. I promise that, except with your own consent, you shall see nobody. And we ourselves will do all that we can to lighten your care. Say that you will come.”

“ The effort must be made at some time,” answered his lordship; “ and really it is matter of indifference to me what I do. Well, I will be ready to accompany you in an hour.”

Thus the acute stage of the distress ended. The grief was not abated, but the sufferer began to master it. By degrees he reappeared in his accustomed orbit. His own friends did not chatter about his affairs; and as the season was far on the wane, the world was less observant than it had been a month ago.

Emma Seward, who fancied herself more guilty in regard to her cousin's suffering than she really was, did her utmost, one may be sure, to console him. She, with sincere tongue, joined heartily in his praises of Thyrsa's perfections. She was, indeed, deeply grateful to Thyrsa, and felt that she was one in a thousand. But she would fain have penetrated the mystery of Thyrsa's conduct. While dismissing one unexceptionable lover, she seemed equally disposed to transport to a distance him for whose sake she might be thought to have refused a most flattering offer. Was there a third lover somewhere in the dark? Or was *du Lys*,

now that the way was clear for him, not so very eager to seize his opportunity, and was Thyrza only making the best of a disappointment by pretending to encourage an arrangement which she was unable to alter? This last hypothesis did not satisfy Emma at all, because it did not consist with Thyrza's known sincerity and open dealing. She was greatly puzzled.

As long as Miss Knowles remained without a favoured lover it was possible that Lord Hardyknute's suit might at any time be renewed. Miss Seward, therefore, although she had averted the immediate calamity which she had feared, had yet to endure a constant anxiety, the grief of which, and the terror of its continuance, oppressed her sadly. Like every afflicted one, she thought earnestly of what might be done yet farther to assuage her pain. And although she could not reconcile Thyrza's professed willingness to be parted from du Lys with the supposition that he was the object of her secret love, yet she thought it might be well to have this important strand of the twist cleared from knots and puckers. After well weighing all the arguments, she saw, notwithstanding contradictions, still much reason for believing that du Lys was the pivot about which this complicated scheme was turning. It was impossible to judge what considerations might be influencing Thyrza, who was a strange and very high-minded girl; but, what-

ever they might be, it would do no harm, and might do much good, if he were to become animated in his addresses and urgent in his demands. She knew that du Lys, as long as he believed that Hardyknute's suit was acceptable to Thyrza, would not aspire to her favour. It was probable that he was to this moment under the impression that the way was barred against him. But if he should discover that Hardyknute's chance was gone, might he not bid for the vacant honour of being her knight, and would he not immediately credit himself with having been the cause of the refusal?

Now it appeared to Miss Seward most desirable that Colonel du Lys should clearly understand how things now stood. Accordingly, she took an early opportunity of explaining to du Lys why Lord Hardyknute had so suddenly lost his spirits and energy. Miss Knowles, she told him, had positively refused his offer of marriage. The communication had this effect, that whereas du Lys knew already that Thyrza was not to marry Hardyknute, he now learned that it was from no hesitation of Hardyknute that it was not a match, but because Miss Knowles had thought proper to reject the proposal. If anything had been wanting to rivet his allegiance to Thyrza, it was now supplied. She had, while still uncertain how he would behave towards her, declined a coronet and very many ac-

companying advantages in order that her hand might be free for him to ask if he chose. He thus comprehended the strength of Thyrza's affection for him; he began also to appreciate its lofty character. When he left her, after the first *éclaircissement* between them, it was in the belief that any resolution which she might have founded upon odd or simple fancies would give way before a lover's arguments, and the forcible manner in which he knew how to present them: but he was learning now how spiritual was the love which he had won from the peasant girl in the Vert fields; how little its resolves were likely to be shaken by amorous persuasions and importunities; how boldly it could dare, and with what constancy it would suffer!

CHAPTER XVIII.

A SECOND PARTING.

THYRZA KNOWLES had obtained the extravagant wish on which, two years ago, she had set her heart. Du Lys her chosen, had avowed his love for her, had besought her, was daily beseeching her, to become his wife without delay. It is impossible to describe in words the happiness and delight which she experienced. That pleasure which her rise in the world had been insufficient to produce, was now hers in overflowing measure. But she had too active a mind to sit down and be content just to enjoy. The bliss to which she had attained opened up new interests, and what she was pleased to regard as new duties. She made du Lys explain to her exactly how his exchange was to be brought about—she tried hard to understand how military promotions and appointments are generally arranged; it was an occupation to her to learn in outline what sort of life the colonel of a regiment in India generally led, and

she was very inquisitive as to the exact meaning of some military terms. It seemed to her that she belonged now to the army. She went to see a large review in the Park, and after that would, whenever she could be properly accompanied, go forth ere Lady Sarah Gard had made her appearance, and witness the Guard mounting at the palace. After du Lys was gazetted to the Browns, as he very soon was, she studied the names in the Army List of all the officers of the regiment (of whom neither he nor she knew one), and procured a history of the corps, and read up its gallant achievements in all quarters of the world. The names of the Staff in du Lys's presidency became familiar to her as household words, and she gained some information as to the stations that were most sought after by troops. If Thyrsa meant to banish du Lys from her sight, it is clear that she intended to keep him in her thoughts.

As Thyrsa had insisted that there was no engagement between du Lys and herself, there was nothing to announce to friends on either side. She did, however, think it due to Lady Sarah Gard to tell her of all that had happened, and of how things now stood. This she did before the dejected Lord Hardyknute had begun again to mingle with the world, and had had opportunity of pouring out to Lady Sarah his confession and lament. Her ladyship was surprised at

Thyrza's want of prudence, and at her wilfulness ; but as Thyrza had acted on the promptings of her own mind, and had not taken any advice, Lady Sarah did not, now that the resolution was taken, criticise what had been done. She did, however, make a sort of protest against the postponement of the marriage, as that seemed to be still remediable.

"I can only congratulate you heartily, my dear," said her ladyship, "on having gained the affections of a young man who is in every way so estimable as Beauclerc du Lys. Whatever there was about him of levity or frivolity has been cast aside, and he gives every promise of being distinguished. I could have felt very happy if Hardyknute had been your choice ; he is a different kind of person, but one whom no woman could ever repent of having loved and married. But you know best what pleases yourself ; and I can only repeat my felicitations that your taste and your judgment have directed you so well. I am much mistaken, however, if Beauclerc does not rebel strongly against the delay which you have prescribed."

"He has already protested," answered Thyrza, "but it is a necessary part of the arrangement. He must go to his duties as little encumbered as possible, and he must return to receive praise and honour. When he has got those, he may take a wife too if he is in the mind."

"No one ought to say you are imprudent, Thyrza, although your prudence is certainly very different from that of many persons who think themselves clever. Your prudence is utterly unselfish—perhaps too unselfish. I don't know that there is any need of giving my gallant relative so long a probation. A hundred accidents, without anybody being to blame, may come between you, if you neglect the favourable present."

"I should not like to lose him," said Thyrza. "But I had rather lose him and know that he had distinguished himself than think that I had in any way stood between him and honour."

"Why, my dear, you should have been a Roman lady. But there were high-minded Norman girls too; I suppose it is your blood that is asserting itself."

This talk about blood—of which, by the by, she now heard a good deal—rather disposed Thyrza to incredulity. In the first place, she thought that any other girl who was sincere in her love would act just as she was doing; in the second place, she recollected the life she had led in the period between her father's death and the recovery of Claybarrow, and thought how any mention of her "blood" would have been ridiculed then. It may have been that her simple breeding had as much to do with the disinterestedness of her attachment as her descent. Nature is

not in every respect improved upon by education and worldly wisdom. Miranda transformed into a "smart" young lady, with a keen eye to an establishment, would forfeit a good deal of our sympathy.

Afterwards, Lady Sarah Gard added, with some hesitation, "There is one thing, my dear Thyrza, which I should like to mention to you. It strikes me that Beauclerc's limited means may be a cause of your refusing to burden him with a wife at present. Your pardon, dear; but pray hear me out. I told him not long ago—before I was aware of his sentiments towards you—that he might count upon assistance from me if he required it. Now there is an additional reason why my aid should be forthcoming. I had resolved, when I thought it likely that you would form a different connection, that you should not go dowerless to your husband; much more, then, should I insist upon portioning you when you are about to marry one of my own kin. Do not allow money to be the cause of delay."

Thyrza made a suitable answer to this generous speech. But she assured Lady Sarah Gard that fortune had nothing to do with her resolution, to which she would be found to adhere, whatever might happen. Lady Sarah, it may be presumed from her words, would have acted differently had she been in Thyrza's place. It is certain, nevertheless, that she appreciated and ad-

mired Thyrza's magnanimity. She was charmed to find such strength of character underlie the simplicity which had first taken her so much. If she had had a daughter of her own, she would have desired that it should be such a one as Thyrza. This would hardly have been without Thyrza's experience, but it pleased her ladyship to think that it might have been.

Let us now pass to the end of the season. Lord Hardyknute, very sad still, but become a little sociable again, was going at once to the Continent, to try and learn to bear his burden. It would never grow lighter, he was sure; but his shoulders might get nerved to it. He let fall some remarks expressive of his opinion that another Childe Harold was about to leave these shores. But, excellent fellow, this could only raise a kindly smile. There was not a particle of gall in his nature; such a thought as "Why should I for others groan, where none will sigh for me?" never entered his breast. He was disappointed, and broken down, and weary of his life, but his sympathies were as warm and kindly as ever: the iron which had entered into him was not returned upon mankind in the form of iron, but rather of the milk of human kindness: little as he liked his load, he would not, for the world, have shifted a grain of it on to the back of another.

Miss Knowles was going home to Beech Lodge with

Sir Eldred and Miss Seward, who would return for a few days to Ayresfield before going to Scotland. Lady Sarah Gard also was going north for a short time, but she proposed to be in London to bid adieu to Colonel du Lys.

He, du Lys, could not leave town at present, but, just before starting, he would run down to the Vert district to take leave of Thyrza, after having strayed with her over some of the fields and lanes, especially the walk to Churchends. He got on as fast as he could with his preparations, being anxious now to get away. The sooner he got to India, the sooner in all probability he would be able to return and claim Thyrza for his bride. Being very busy in many ways, he did not heed the emptiness of London, where, except one or two officials left at the Horse Guards, he had not a soul to speak to. An exception, however, must be made to that sweeping expression, supposing Wiggy Warner to have had a soul, as some people maintained that he had; for he had the happiness of seeing that officer once again before leaving.

One morning at breakfast he came across an announcement in the 'Gazette' that the Colonel had been appointed governor of a fort on the coast, known to be ruinous, and garrisoned by two lame gunners and a staff sergeant. It was a full-pay appointment; the duties were known to be not ex-

hausting; and to have damaged the public interests there would have been a difficult exploit, seeing that the work might have been blown up or burnt with great benefit to the country. The only thing to be apprehended on Wiggy's account was that the place was too remote to be the resort of that genial company which was so essential to his comfort.

Later in the day, he saw Wiggy in the same club in which he had met him on the night of his return to England. They congratulated each other on return to full pay.

"These things only want pushing," said Wiggy. "There is no animal so really craven as your Horse Guards official. A correspondence spoils his appetite, and a little puncture from the press terrifies him out of his senses. You have only to have a reasonably strong case" (here Colonel Warner stroked his moustache complacently), "and to keep at them. You must win in the end."

"You certainly have exemplified your own rule very well," said du Lys. "All your wishes seem now to have been gratified."

"Well, not quite all. I find the duties in my new post will be rather onerous. As you know, I don't mind hard work, but the neighbourhood is rather stupid, and one would like to slip away now and then. So I've applied for a fort-adjutant."

"And I daresay you'll get one."

"Not the least doubt about it. The case is so strong, they can't refuse. I daresay you remembered some of my hints when you were circumventing their devices, eh?"

"I own that I was greatly indebted to a lady's good offices."

Colonel Warner gave a wink that brought the curls of his wig down over his right eye. "You've got some idea," said he, patronisingly, "of the pivot on which these things turn. Extraordinary how they manage to impose upon the bulk of the service that justice and merit, and so on, are what they look to. Even men who show considerable penetration in other matters are mere children about this."

"You should publish a manual, colonel, for officers seeking appointments."

"No, hang it, that won't do. Must have the benefit of one's own discoveries, except where one chooses to oblige a friend, you know. But I say, du Lys, I wish, with my knowledge of these matters, I was a young man now, instead of being at my meridian. As it is, I hope to do something before I die."

"By the way, how is your friend—the hale patriarch, you know?"

"Oh, fresh as ever. But he's been a little worried lately by an action some little hussey's bringing against

him for breach of promise of marriage. Most absurd thing. Of course he was only amusing himself, and never made any promise at all. It's the man's way."

"An awkward thing."

"Can't succeed, you know. Nothing to apprehend in the end. But it takes up time that might be better devoted to other things. Did you wish for a regiment?"

"I did, particularly."

"Glad you succeeded. Prefer the Staff myself. Something devilish comfortable in a cocked hat. Inclined for a rubber this evening, or a little three-card loo?"

"However much inclined I might be, I can't indulge any inclination. Pressing everything forward for embarkation."

"Ah yes. India, isn't it?"

"It is."

"If you meet Mackechnie out there, let him know that he hesitated too long and lost his chance. Tell him I've accepted something at home, and I don't think I shall change now."

The other sojourners had left town, as had been arranged. Du Lys, nearly ready for a start, once more saw Lady Sarah Gard in town, and once more assured her of his gratitude and of his determination to begin a new career—some account of which he hoped to render to her before long, when he should return to

claim his bride. "I shall feel the greatest interest in your fortunes," said her ladyship, "and I hope to meet you again and to see you happily married. The doctors tell me I may live a good while yet if I take care; and I mean to take care."

"I trust you will," answered du Lys. "I am as much interested in your welfare as anybody can be. Believe me, I shall look very anxiously for accounts of your condition. Will it trouble you too much to write to me?"

"It will not trouble me. You know that I cannot walk, and that I have necessarily a good many hours of the day to dispose of, and letter-writing is a resource. If that were not so, I should have pleasure in writing to you. But you will have a more interesting correspondent, will you not?"

"Thyrza says I may write to her once in six months, and she will answer the letters; but I shall desire a much more frequent correspondence."

"Thyrza may relent in many respects when it comes to parting. She cannot know what her own strength of will is till it has been tried by that touchstone."

But Thyrza did know; and she did not abate one tittle of her resolution, even when the agony of parting was sharpest. She had been glad to return home a little before du Lys could repair to the Vert district, in order that she might have a few quiet days with

her mother, to whom she had judged it unwise to communicate by letter either of the two events on which she had determined so promptly. She feared lest a confession of her having rejected such a match as Lord Hardyknute might provoke most strong and urgent protests and remonstrances from the maternal solicitude; and she as shrewdly feared that when regrets on this score had been healed by notice of her conditional acceptance of du Lys, Mrs Knowles might have contended vehemently for securing that admirer more summarily than to Thyrza herself appeared desirable. When she should be alone with her mother, after a little time had been allowed for the late incidents to become accomplished and historical, she felt sure of being able to defend the course which she had pursued.

Mrs Knowles had had sundry misgivings lest London hours and London amusements should have to some extent dimmed the beauty of her daughter. Great, therefore, was her delight when she received her treasure back with sparkling eyes, glowing cheeks, and a flow of spirits such as Thyrza had not manifested for certainly two years. A sort of remorse, and a contempt for her own vulgarity, overcame Thyrza's mother when she saw how things were, and reflected that people who were in the habit of keeping the season in London did not condemn that practice as inimical

to health, but only those who theorised on what the effects of a London season ought to be, and comforted themselves for not enjoying it by proving to demonstration that it could be enjoyed only at the expense of peace of mind and health of body.

Thyrza's general appearance, in fact, answered the dozen first questions that Mrs Knowles would have asked; and for answers to the many dozen of other questions which she was impatient to ask, the matron was constrained to wait; for the young lady willed that she would be satisfied concerning many domestic and rural matters before she would enter upon the subject, not easily to be despatched, of the wonders, glories, and pleasures of the season in town.

Mrs Knowles had been much less indisposed than usual during the summer—indeed she might say that she had felt almost well; and instead of having to summon Thyrza home, as she had promised to do if she felt at all seriously indisposed, she declared that she had found better medicine in each of Thyrza's lively letters than doctors and nurses could give. The companion who had come from Scrone to stay with her during Thyrza's absence had made herself agreeable and useful. Jane and Maggy were still in the establishment, and had on the whole been steady and industrious. It was admitted, in answer to some searching questions from Thyrza, that there *had* been one or two *pourparlers* on

subjects which might have led to serious dissensions, but which had been happily compromised, so that Mrs Knowles was able to announce the most amicable relations with all parties. Artificial flowers, and young men—those *irritamenta malorum* of the household—had been the objects of contention. The garden had been lovely. The cat was well (although she *had* been so unwell at one time as to cause anxiety); and there were three such dear little kittens—two black-and-white, and one tortoiseshell !

As to matters not strictly domestic, there was a new milliner in Wyde who rather gave herself airs, but who was expected to be useful in maintaining the balance of power, and disabusing Miss Eyelet of the idea that she could do as she liked. It had been necessary to change the milk and butter woman, some of whose transactions were found to have been a little questionable. The new butter was not quite so nice as the old (at least Mrs Knowles didn't think so ; Thyrza might be of a different opinion), and perhaps it would have been better if Jane had not been so zealous in weighing every pound. The old man who went round with the white sand was dead—had died suddenly, poor old man—and there was as yet no regular successor. Mrs Knowles thought this might be a good opening for Michael Clipp. Of the two dogs that followed the butcher's boy, one had lost an eye,

and had his nether lip dragged down in a disfiguring way in combat with a badger. The badger was killed at last, but that was but small comfort to the poor dog. It must really be a cruel and horrid animal to mangle a dog in such a way. Did the badger, Thyrza inquired, come raging out of the woods and set upon the dog? No; Mrs Knowles did not think that was quite the way of it: the badger, she believed, was brought in a sack to Clunder Green, where all the dogs in the neighbourhood were set upon it. This dog had caused a very important discovery. It was so ugly now that she could not help knowing it from other dogs; and she had seen it near the house on a Sunday. Butchers' boys do not come round on Sundays, and so it was strange what the dog could be doing there. Later in the day a very smart young man was seen talking to Maggy, and this proved to be the butcher's boy in his Sunday clothes.

John Styles had returned to England, and had been permitted to come down on furlough that he might visit his relatives at Wyde. He had solemnly assured his mother that he had not been at or near Babylon; but the poor woman thought he could not have learned worse language than he was now in the habit of using if he had been to twenty Babylons. He had brought home some Russians' ears, and had given such dreadful descriptions of the wounds by which both Russians

and English had been killed, that on several occasions Mrs Styles had been constrained to procure two penny-worths of gin, the accounts gave her such a turn. He had come in his uniform—that was to say, in a part of his uniform, not the grandest part, which was fortunate, as even his diminished glory had caused much sensation. He swaggered dreadfully, and had said openly, with much presumption, that the Russians were child's play compared to the women. Guns and muskets were only a man's natural dangers that he was born to ; but girls, so he said, were the devil (this in a whisper). To increase his impudence, as it were, the daughter of Sims the grocer, and the widow Flanagan, had had a fight about him.

The above are selections only from the news which Mrs Knowles had to communicate. When she had retailed as much as any reasonable hearer could have exacted, and when the tea was ready, Thyrza, who seemed rather to shrink from taking up the talking, remembered that she had brought presents for the servants and for one or two good people who were accustomed to come about Beech Lodge ; and she went to find them. Little pretexts like these, however, could but postpone a revelation which was by no means disagreeable, although she was so unwilling to begin it.

With a good deal of hesitation and circumlocution, and a good deal of prompting from Mrs Knowles, whose

mind jumped to many conclusions before her ears received them from the faltering confession, it was at length related how Colonel du Lys was once more in England, how it had been he who came to the rescue on the night of the fire, how he had been appointed to the command of a regiment, and how he had told Thyrza that he loved her with all his heart, and had asked her to marry him and go with him to India. The mother was gratified in the highest degree by du Lys's proposal. She thought more of the proud du Lys than of any family that she knew of. When du Lys had, in past days, noticed Thyrza as an attractive peasant, she had not thought the matter so very extraordinary, and she had thought then how stranger things sometimes came about than that du Lys should come back and marry Thyrza. It seemed now as if this fancy had been a presentiment, the shadow, thrown before, of a coming event. Mrs Knowles, whose ordinary deportment was listless and rather melancholy, was more elevated by this event than by her change of fortune, or by anything that had befallen her since her husband died. Her eyes were bright, her countenance animated and almost young, her voice cheerful, and her movements lively. Thyrza was careful to dwell particularly on du Lys being obliged to proceed immediately to India before she owned that she had refused to marry him at present. And the an-

nouncement, though not altogether palatable, was in some sort a relief; for, before it was made, the mother had been beginning to feel nervous about the dangers of India, and the horror of an immediate separation from Thyrza. Indeed Mrs Knowles's mind was, and continued to be, drawn alternately in opposite directions—at one time regretful, and quite angry that Thyrza had not at once closed with this brilliant offer; at another time reflecting on the anxiety and sorrow which the contrary action of Thyrza would have brought to her.

At first, it will be perceived, the matron was informed only of du Lys's declaration and offer: not a word was said of Lord Hardyknute. And she was so entirely satisfied, and so flattered by the conquest of du Lys, that she had no suspicion or desire of further execution by Thyrza's charms. By-and-by, however, as Thyrza kept back nothing from her, she had to learn that Lord Hardyknute also had offered himself to Thyrza and been refused. This was a flouting of fortune to which she found it hard to reconcile herself. She was angry with her daughter at first, and asked her what on earth she could have been thinking of. But Thyrza silenced all reproach by saying that she loved another man, and that she could not in conscience, nor as a matter of affection, have agreed to become Lord Hardyknute's wife.

The intelligence that Colonel du Lys would spend

a day or two in the Vert district before leaving England, impelled Mrs Knowles to suppress emotions arising from past incidents, and to take some thought for his approaching visit. In some cases where an impression has been made by a young lady in a London season which she has been able to enjoy through the courtesy of friends more fashionable than herself, there would be danger in introducing her admirer to her homely dwelling, lest his love should subside at sight of her diminished state. But du Lys had known and distinguished Thyrsa when she lived in St Ann's Cottage. He could have been in no respect deceived by her appearance in London, and he probably believed her home condition to be less elevated than it really was. Mrs Knowles was concerned that Thyrsa had not engaged her lover to send some notice of his coming. It would be so awkward, she thought, if he were to arrive at a time when they were not prepared to receive him properly; and they were not like people who live always in style, and to whom the arrival of a visitor was as convenient at one time as at another.

The meeting came about much more easily and agreeably than if it had been concerted and prepared. It happened on this wise. Mrs Knowles, while Thyrsa was at her studies (to which she had faithfully returned after her vacation), was in the little garden

which surrounded Beech Lodge instructing the gardener, a person who came once a-week from the nursery at Scrone to keep things tidy. Mrs Knowles had decreed that certain roots, which had done their duty for the year 1856, should be shelved until another season; and of course the gardener properly resented the formation by a lay person of opinions and resolutions on subjects which were strictly professional. He therefore combated the lady's directions, although he had before been prepared to make a recommendation entirely in accordance therewith. There was no hurry, he thought, about the roots for a day or two, or even for a week or two: any time between this and Michaelmas would do; while if something wasn't done at once with these rose-bushes, and if that there creeper wasn't properly trained before the colours began to turn, the whole beauty of the plant would be lost. Then, again, old Charley Pearse, in Scrone, who was never wrong about the weather, had heard of some heavy torrents in California, and thought they might be over here any day: if he, the gardener, did not open the ground at once and see that the pipes was clear, who was to warrant them against having the whole place turned into a pool, or what was worse, a sop, before his next day came?

Now Mrs Knowles had, in her time, been fain from

fell necessity to postpone her own opinions and wishes to those of others, but she had not the slightest idea of not having her own way as to her own garden. It is only those who have learned how to obey that are competent to command, says a somewhat musty maxim; and one reason for this may be that those who have obeyed know something of the working of a mind that is in a state of subordination, can see into its little motives, and having the knowledge of its tricks, has the power of dealing with them. Whether that reason be good or bad, it is a truth that Mrs Knowles divined exactly the source of the contrariness of her workman.

"You don't like coming here to work, I suppose?" said she.

"Not like!" echoed the man. "I likes coming here a sight better than to many places."

"Then it must be incivility that makes you object to raising those roots and storing them as I wish. In either case I must see whether Mr Spudd cannot send me a more accommodating man."

"Law now, mum, look ye. I wasn't meaning to be uncivil like, not the least on it. Only I told ye, mum, quite agreeable, what seemed to me best."

"I didn't ask you what was best; and I believe you think exactly as I do about the roots. At any rate I wish to have them disposed of before——"

“Ax pardon, mum. A gentleman.”

“Pardon my interrupting you,” said du Lys, for it was he. “I was told that I should find Mrs Knowles here, and I took the liberty of—not intruding, I hope—into the garden.”

“I am Mrs Knowles, sir. You have, I presume, some business with me. Excuse me if I ought to recognise you.”

‘I am Colonel du Lys. Personally I have no claim on your recollection. But I think you have heard of me, and I *hope* that I have been the subject of communications very recently made to you.”

Mrs Knowles had a better address and more self-command than she gave herself credit for. In anticipation of a rencontre of this kind she was mistrustful of her own behaviour; but when the trial came upon her she was generally but little wanting.

“I ought to have discerned of what race you come: have heard much of you recently: I have great pleasure in receiving you here, Colonel du Lys,” said she.

“It is but two hours,” he replied, “since I arrived in this neighbourhood; the hour is not quite the right one for a visit, but my time here will be very short, and I was impatient to ascertain how much of it I might be permitted to spend at Beech Lodge.”

“Shall we walk towards the house?”

Du Lys bowed. "I trust that Miss Knowles is well," said he.

"She is quite well, and at home: busy with her books, I believe. I should like to tell her that you are here. Would you mind remaining for a few minutes in this room while I speak with her?"

The "few minutes" were not exceeded. Presently the mother came to tell du Lys that Thyrza would receive him in the drawing-room; and she desired Maggy to conduct him thither, she herself returning to the garden.

When du Lys entered, Thyrza was standing near the middle of the room expecting his approach. For the first time in their acquaintance she received him in a bashful and somewhat frightened manner; but she held out her hand with a smile. "Dear Thyrza," said he, as he took the hand. And then a colour like the break of day mantled in Thyrza's cheeks, and mounted to her temples. She had not spoken, but stood, drooping somewhat, as was not her wont. His arm encircled her, while he scarcely knew what he did, and Thyrza's form, soft, elastic, yielding, was in his embrace. He pressed her close to his heart, and—well, never mind.

It was the first time that Thyrza had ever given any allowance to her affection. She had been much overcome when she heard that du Lys was at hand, and

her emotion had increased even while he was on the stair. His voice, speaking to her as his own, subdued her still more, and when he took her in his arms she surrendered herself to the embrace, sinking closer, closer, till she leaned upon his breast, and her cheek rested on his shoulder.

After two years of rigorous self-restraint, the girl emancipated her feelings, revealed the deep passion of her soul, and raised her lover's delight to an ecstasy. In all her life she had scarcely known what it was to indulge any of the yearnings of her bosom. In her girlhood all had been privation, exclusion, toil, and care. These she regarded as her appointed portion; and when at last du Lys won her heart from her, the lines seemed to have fallen to her in thorny places indeed. Her fancy was to feed for ever on that which was impossible in fact. And she had, ere she was fairly a woman, resigned herself to what might be called a widowhood of the soul, had it not been for a hope against hope.

But Thyrsa's entire confession of her affection did not indicate any failure of her resolution. She insisted upon du Lys going to join his regiment, and assured him that when he came back, if he found her alive, he would find her altogether his.

It was a great delight to roam once more across the fields and woods. Du Lys and Thyrsa took together

once again the well-remembered road from Brigend to Churchends. It was his joy to recall scenes wherein Thyrza had acted in her peasant's dress ; and to think then how pure and how good she was—how many of those who had been reared in purple and fine linen possessed hearts a thousand times less worth winning than that which had been won by him.

It was not till now that Thyrza spoke about the slippers and necklaces which had come so mysteriously to her, and that du Lys, declaring how constantly she had been in his thoughts, told her how and when he came to send them, and gave her the history also of poor Treworden. She saw now how she had always had a place, though it might have been at first a retired one, in his affections. Du Lys was anxious always to speak of the future ; but Thyrza, accustomed from sad experience to mistrust the time to come, did not encourage speculation.

One day during his visit, Thyrza and her mother accompanied du Lys to the seat of his ancestors, the home where he was born. The family were still absent, and du Lys, save the domestics, was its only occupant. Mrs Knowles had always felt an awe of the house of Lys, so grand, stately, and mysterious. The old Tower had never for two generations been open to general visitors, and few of those who had been born in its shadow, as it were, knew much of its

precincts or interior. Thyrsa, now known to be blended in blood with this proud line, was about, if all should go well with her, to become closely allied with it. It was a somewhat solemn but also a proud day when the two women traversed these ancient, and, as it seemed to them, weird possessions—saw the swords and armour, the old, old chambers, the oak coffers containing records of the race, the rude maps, showing the honours and manors which had in early days been subject to the du Lys. Not less interesting were the portraits of du Lys's parents, and of himself and his brother as lads. It was a memorable visit.

The party went all together to visit many people whom they had all long known. Not last among these was the family of William Clipp, who had good reason to remember that autumn. Michael Clipp, poor fellow, could not help behaving very confusedly, and feeling much like a culprit in presence of du Lys and Thyrsa. He never seemed to remember that neither of them knew anything of his having informed against them; nor that he, in his heart, had meant no ill in what he did. Whether the consciousness of his own censoriousness had made Michael more tolerant of territorial magnates cannot be stated.

The few days which du Lys had to spare flew only too quickly past. They were over. Adieux were said, and he tore himself away. Thyrsa said that he should

never be out of her mind while he was absent ; but she nevertheless prescribed, something in the style of the dame of old days, that he was to come back with his shield, or on it. The parting went off very quietly, but it was attended by much sickness of heart for all that. It was a time of great trial and sadness that short interval between du Lys's departure from the Vert district and his sailing from the shores of England. But "time and the hour runs through the roughest day ;" the anchor was weighed, and he was gone.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE END OF THE STORY.

WITHOUT a close account here it will be easy to imagine how Thyrsa Knowles once more took to the study of letters from abroad, and of military gazettes; how she read books about India; and how she advanced brown to the post of her favourite colour, because her dearest was at the head of the Browns, and because (secondly, and as a minor reason) a sober colour was the fittest for one in a state of bereavement. She went on with her studies more assiduously than she had done before, and she made a beginning of learning to dance, du Lys having made her promise that she would dance with him when he came back to claim her. It seemed at first that she had settled into a quiet routine of education and expectation that might last till she should be summoned to become a bride. But Fate was not minded that time should roll along in unbroken quiet.

Du Lys probably, before embarking, took his brother and Lady Helen to some extent into his confidence ; but he said nothing of his love-affair to any but near connections, it having been Thyrsa's express injunction that no engagement should be announced. Besides those of his own name, Lady Sarah Gard and Mrs Knowles were the only persons acquainted with his relation to Thyrsa Knowles.

The autumn and winter which followed the summer in which the foregoing events took place were, in the Vert district, as unlike those of the previous year as season could be from season ; and it is believed that Miss Thyrsa Knowles, her charms and preferences, had something to do with the difference. Lord Hardyknute did not come home to Malmseymead at all. He deputed—or rather Sir Eldred Seward deputed, for Hardyknute would not interest himself much in the matter—another sportsman to look to the hounds, and betook himself to foreign lands, still occasionally comparing himself to Childe Harold. Except that they both forsook England rather disgusted with the award of fate, there was no resemblance between them, not even in the start ; for Hardyknute was not suffered to go off a solitary, forsaken wanderer. Miss Seward impressed upon her father the impropriety, nay, the cruelty, of letting his lordship roam about by himself while in his present frame of mind. And Sir Eldred,

although he would probably not have considered himself bound to travel on Hardyknute's account, did nevertheless accompany Hardyknute on account of his daughter, whose health was seriously shaken. "Travel will be the very thing for her," thought the baronet; and so he at once agreed with her that they ought not to let Hardyknute out of their ken.

Up to the end of the year Thyrsa was engaged in studies of different kinds; but with January there came a check to learning, for a pressing letter from Lady Sarah Gard summoned Thyrsa to her side at Hortlewood—that was the name of her residence. Her ladyship had been severely affected by the cold, was in low spirits, and did not fancy any one's attentions so much as Thyrsa's. If Mrs Knowles happened fortunately to be pretty well and able to spare her daughter, would Thyrsa charitably come to her at once? Thyrsa went, paid a long visit, and returned home when Lady Sarah had made some progress toward recovery. The winds of March, however, again caused her ladyship to be confined to her chamber, and once more Miss Knowles's company and service were in requisition. Recovery was very tardy this time, and spring was near giving way to summer before Thyrsa was quite at liberty to set her face once more towards Beech Lodge. Before she left Hortlewood, she had been startled by a piece of intelligence which was

agitating to most people in this country, but which demanded all her fortitude to think calmly of it. The great mutiny had broken out in India.

Meanwhile du Lys had reached his destination and assumed command of his regiment. He had a great deal to learn in the way of detail work, and a great deal to do in putting into execution many ideas which he had for long been revolving in his mind. He stood the climate well, which was a point immensely in his favour. It took a little time and patience to establish perfectly friendly and confidential relations between a young colonel exchanged from the Guards and officers of a stamp very different from that of Guardsmen, some of whom were older men and older soldiers than their chief. But the time and patience were given, and a perfect accord was accomplished: the regiment became proud of, and attached to, its commanding officer; and the Browns, always ready for fighting, but not at all times a model of correctness, passed into a high state of efficiency.

Everything, in a service so very different from that to which he had been accustomed, and in society which was entirely strange to him, could not possibly be pleasant to du Lys. But he had made up his mind to what was worse than the reality proved to be; and then there was a good deal on the agreeable side of the account. Foremost among his advantages was, that

old Mackechnie was quartered in the same place with him. With good health, plenty of work, and as much amusement as he could find time for, he found the months roll away more quickly than he had expected.

Before his six months had expired, he wrote to Thyrza excusing his impatience by putting forward the long time during which the letter would be in transit, and by proving that the appointed time would have more than elapsed before the epistle reached the dear hand for which it was intended. It was in every respect such a letter as Thyrza desired. Throughout it there was evidence of affection ; but it was not filled with pretty phrases and vows and devotion : it gave an account of all that had happened, of the country in which he was sojourning, of his pursuits, of his regiment, and of the means by which he was endeavouring to do some good in his generation. It quite delighted Thyrza ; and she answered, in a long despatch which astonished du Lys, not because it evinced the good sense, or good feeling, or shrewd perceptions of the writer—for these he expected to find strongly marked in it ; but because of its graceful, almost elegant style, and of the clever, lively remarks that pervaded it. He found, with intense satisfaction, that he was taking the right course to make Thyrza happy, and to win her entire approval ; and he found, moreover, that the wife whom he hoped to win, the Rachel for whom he was

serving, was a woman of whom he, du Lys as he was, might well be proud.

It was while he was yet feeling the glow, as one may call it, which Thyrza's most cheering lines had created, that the first throes were felt of that dreadful convulsion which shook the British power in India to its centre. There was the shortest possible time to think, and the most urgent call possible to act. Everything depended upon decision and rapidity. The Browns and a handful of artillery were separated by thousands of rebels from other European troops, and were literally in contact with a force of Sepoys four times their number, which was expected to break into open mutiny every hour. Mackechnie, who was the senior officer within reach, did not give the mutineers much time to concert measures. At every turn he was too quick for the rascals. Whenever they turned out for mischief, they found the ubiquitous half-battery, of which Mackechnie had the disposal, with loaded guns and lighted matches on their flank; or they were faced by a wing of the Browns that would have swept them off the earth if they had hesitated to obey the command to lay down their arms. Several thousands of the disaffected were disarmed; and the sharp practice that was going on under Mackechnie not only relieved his own neighbourhood, but so paralysed the insurgents of an extensive area around him, that

there was time given for troops to come up, and in all that region the horrors were comparatively small.

No sooner was their own district trodden into submission, than the little force which had collected there, after leaving small garrisons to overawe the population, marched away under Mackechnie as brigadier to the relief of other districts where the Europeans had not been so fortunate as to master the Sepoys. The adventures of this brigade were of the most moving kind; the sights which were seen by it, and the incidents with which it had to deal were for ever stamped on the memory of every man in it; the rescues which it effected and the crimes which it prevented were numerous; and its sufferings, its labours, and its valour obtained for it the highest renown. The history of what it achieved and underwent has been read, it is supposed, by every one who is likely to glance over this page, and therefore no particular account is interwoven with the narrative.

Brigadier Mackechnie, in his reports, gave the very highest praise to the gallant Browns and to their colonel. And, fortunately, there was at last a lieutenant-general in command of several brigades (Mackechnie's among them) and divisions, who took care that honourable mention should be made of Mackechnie himself, and of the important ser-

vices which he had rendered. Full recognition of his value was late in coming, but he got it while he was still hale and hearty. Du Lys had the happier fortune of winning his fame early. Both of them escaped without a wound.

It took time to do all this. More than once the fate of India trembled in the balance; yet few of those at home were so much impressed by the uncertainty concerning England's ultimate gain or loss, as by the accounts brought by every mail of the dreadful deeds which were being perpetrated. The fiendish tortures under which any European of either sex, or of any age, would be sure to die if he or she should fall into the power of the accursed barbarian, raised anxiety to the highest pitch in the breasts of all, but especially of those whose loved ones were in that land of ineffable crimes. Troops on the march, and penetrating into remote regions, were often long unheard of, so that friends in England who prayed and yearned for their deliverance bore much agony of suspense. It was especially the case that troops employed as Mackechnie's brigade was, were for long periods without means of communication; and, as they were soon known to be doing most hazardous exploits, rumour took occasion, in these intervals of uncertainty, to circulate disastrous stories concerning them. They were butchered many times over, accord-

ing to tales which obtained currency, and many of which obtained temporary belief.

If a correct representation has been given in these pages of the disposition of Thyrza Knowles, it will be almost unnecessary to describe at length the racking distress which she underwent for a year and a half, for the year 1859 had commenced before her trial ended. Thyrza showed a brave front, as she knew how to do when her case was for the time irremediable ; but her suffering was intense for all that. In the summer of 1857 she returned home to Beech Lodge, Lady Sarah Gard being at that time in improved condition, but yet too feeble to encounter the London season.

Soon after Thyrza rejoined her mother, the movements and achievements of the Browns began to be the subject of chief interest in this country ; and she, amid all her solicitude, had the long-coveted satisfaction of hearing the name of du Lys from almost every mouth, coupled with encomiums on his gallantry and enterprise. His pedigree was printed in the newspapers, with a long notice of the history of the family. Beside it she read also a detailed account of Mackechnie, known to her through du Lys's friendly mention of him. A few months ago Mac might have been, for all that the public cared, as parentless as Melchisedec ; but now his ancestry was traced without a flaw to a breeless barbarian

of the fourth century, B.C. The learned genealogist admitted, with apparent candour and moderation, that beyond the century named the descent could not be so clearly seen through every step.

So far all was going as well as could be wished. But the service was full of danger, and of *such* danger. "Oh," thought Thyrza, "if he should be killed or maimed in this terrible war, it will all have been my doing. I urged him to go out. He might not have cared to go at all but for me. At any rate I might have been with him, if I had not been so obstinate. I might have shared his cares, and soothed some of his hardships." But, as the reader knows, Thyrza could not have been with her husband after the danger began; and where else would she, or could she, have been? Every day during the campaign did du Lys bless God for Thyrza's resolution not to accompany him. Even the thought of her having come thither could not be borne.

As the winter came on in 1857 Lady Sarah Gard fell ill again at the first touch of the cold. Again she besought Thyrza to be with her as much as was possible with due regard to her mother's requirements; and throughout that winter, and the spring which followed it, Thyrza was going and returning between Beech Lodge and Hurtlewood. From Lady Sarah Thyrza received the fullest sympathy with all her feel-

ings concerning du Lys, and through her ladyship she obtained the earliest and the best information of what was occurring at the seat of war. Before the New Year they heard of Sir Colin Campbell having arrived in India, and that by this time the ultimate suppression of the mutiny was a certainty. But still, although the result could be predicted, none could foretell the cost at which it might be achieved. The care of her sick friend in some degree diverted Thyrza's mind from her anxieties. Yet it was a weary, dreary winter.

The breath of spring did not bring to Lady Sarah Gard such relief as it had brought the year before. She was worse in April 1858 than she had been at all. Fears were entertained that she would not recover; and she herself thought that her end might be approaching. At this time she would talk to Thyrza, as much as her strength allowed her, of du Lys, and his hoped-for return, which she said she should not live to see. She was exceedingly fond, too, of instructing Thyrza concerning the history of the Angevines, in which it appeared that she was thoroughly well versed, for she was proud of belonging to that ancient house.

One evening her ladyship, being much depressed, called Thyrza to her side and told her that she felt there could be but one termination to her illness. The time had come, she thought, when her mind must be weaned as much as possible from worldly cares and

thoughts, and she would say now two or three words which had to be said about her disposal of her property. Mr Gard had left to his widow a very large fortune for her life. Part of this was to return at her death to his relations, but another part was at her disposal. Thus Mr Gard's relations were provided for as he thought desirable; and as to her ladyship's relations, she had not many near ones, and those were all rich. "I am more concerned for Beauclerc du Lys and yourself than for any of the race," said she; "and I intend that you two shall chiefly benefit by the wealth which I can leave behind me. What I give to you, Thyrza, will be his if he lives to come home; and if Providence should not give him back to your prayers, I wish you to be handsomely provided for. You will find that I have made you what many people would call an heiress, and that your husband, although he was ready to take you without a shilling, will find you not badly endowed."

Thyrza hoped that her friend might live to use her wealth for many a year; but that, in truth, was not to be. Before the summer was at its height, Lady Sarah Gard met her end, after gradually sinking for several weeks. Thyrza was with her to the last—her greatest earthly comfort, as the dying woman said. Thyrza had become greatly attached to this kind friend, and her grief for the loss of her was extreme. This grief

was relieved somewhat by a letter from du Lys reporting himself to be still well, and still successful.

Another letter, from a different kind of person, was received at Beech Lodge about the same time, and this last informed Miss Knowles that Hortlewood was now hers, and that she had succeeded to a fortune of about three thousand pounds a-year.

The time of separation was now rolling away, and Thyrza allowed herself to cherish a hope that ere long her lover would be restored to her. It was decided between the mother and daughter that they would not leave Beech Lodge till next year, and that another autumn and winter should be passed in the Vert district. It was a less melancholy season than the preceding one had been, but still, as being a season of hope deferred, it was a tedious one to Thyrza. Horses of her own were now brought over from Hortlewood, and she had every means of enjoyment that wealth could give her.

The girl Maggy was steadfastly confirmed in her tenets concerning the desert of beauty, by learning the manner in which fortune had favoured Thyrza. "She always knew it would be so," she said; "the fortune had come truly enough; and now the arrival of the king or prince was only a matter of time." Earnestly did she pray that she might not, when Miss Knowles might change her residence, be separated from so deserving and so favoured a person: and

when asked what, in case of her migrating from the district, would become of the butcher's young man, she replied with much indifference, "Oh, he's nothing: there's as good as he anywheres;" evidently feeling that good-looking young women were going up, and that it would be wise in her not to hamper herself with low engagements, but to bide her time, which would be sure to come.

Thyrza Knowles and Lord Hardyknute had not met for two years. He had been absent all the winter next after his proposal to her in London, and she had been very much from home throughout the winter which had succeeded that. During this latter—that is to say, the winter of 1857-58, his lordship had resided again at Malmseymead, and had resumed his old occupations with a view to forcing away the melancholy which oppressed him, and of finding in plentiful outdoor exercise, and in continuous occupation, remedies for body and mind, both of which were much thrown off their balance. But he had not been so successful in this as he had hoped. Black care sat behind him when he was in the saddle, and wrinkled his brow, and quenched the brightness of his eye when he busied himself with affairs. His heart was not in anything that he did; and though at first he forced himself to exertion, he could not long sustain the vigour with which he had begun. Soon he relapsed to a broken careless condi-

tion, still going through the forms of an active life, but really leading a life in which activity was unknown. It was pitiable to see him, and to compare his appearance and manner of to-day with those which he had owned two years before. After Parliament met he was continually rushing away to London as if to attend to important business, and then leaving town again without apparent reason while the business was not half transacted. In the summer he made a voyage, but came back still carrying his burden.

Those who did not know Hardyknute well were astonished to find that a disappointment could so long incapacitate one who had appeared to be of so light and joyous a disposition. But they who understood better the earnestness and strength of his feelings were less surprised to see him so cast down, and anxious lest his frame and spirits should never recover their natural tone. Emma Seward was almost broken-hearted at beholding the signs of his suffering, and the firm hold which his melancholy had taken of him. Emma herself could not be whole either in mind or body while Hardyknute was miserable; and she was fast becoming a querulous invalid, instead of the happy high-spirited girl that she had been.

Hardyknute of course knew of Thyrza's accession of fortune, and, in the autumn of 1858, when he returned from some meaningless travels which he had

been making, he came to see and congratulate her. Thyrza's heart smote her at the sight of him, so greatly was she shocked by the change that had come over him. And yet Thyrza did not see him at his worst, for the good fellow assumed a little gaiety though he had it not, lest his dejection should seem to reproach her, or he should be thought not heartily to rejoice in her prosperity. He was more kind than ever he had been before, if that were possible; he made not the faintest allusion to Thyrza's cruelty; he was overjoyed, he said, at finding she had attained to wealth, of which none living would make a better use than herself, and none was so deserving. It would be his great happiness if he might be allowed to render advice or assistance to her in respect of her newly acquired possessions. He spoke with delight of the name which du Lys had made for himself, and said he hoped ere long to take him by the hand and congratulate him on his deeds and fame. Probably he would not have been a whit less generous in his feelings towards du Lys if he had known how much that hero had interfered with his happiness; but he did not know, or he would have been much shorter in his remarks on du Lys in Thyrza's presence.

When the poor man had gone, Thyrza went away to her chamber that she might sorrow uninterrupted. "I would have cut off my right hand to have saved

him from such misery," she said, "but the heart he asked was not mine to give." And then came Emma Seward, the bloom faded from her cheek, her gay, animated looks and words all gone. Emma came to see Thyrsa again, and, as she said, to rejoice with her. She did; it is believed, most sincerely rejoice at Thyrsa's prosperity; but the visit was not like one of rejoicing, for when poor Emma began to make some comparison between Thyrsa's lot and her own, her strength gave way, and she could not suppress her emotion. Seeing how she was affected, Mrs Knowles went away, and left the friends alone together.

"O Thyrsa," said Emma, "if you had ten times as much it would not be as much as your kindness to me has deserved. You have been a friend indeed."

"Nay," Thyrsa answered; "you overrate what I did. I was very glad to be able to act as you wished, but it really was not the sacrifice you think."

"Thyrsa, will you think me very silly and inconsistent if I make to you now another and a different request?"

"Probably not: I do not expect you to say anything silly or inconsistent."

"Oh, but you do not know how weak and foolish I am now. I want to tell you, Thyrsa, that I give you back your word; that I no longer wish you to be cruel

to Hardyknute ;” and then, in a voice scarcely articulate, “that I beg you to marry him.”

“Emma !”

“I cannot bear to see him suffer as he does. I would have him happy if it should kill me to effect it. Say that you will.”

“My dear Emma, pause one moment and reflect. I told you there was another person to whom I would say ‘yes.’”

“You did ; but *that* has fallen out another way (am I not right in saying so?) You may say ‘yes’ to Hardyknute now if you will. Do, Thyrsa, I pray you.”

“You mistake, my dear Emma—I solemnly assure you that you do. When I spoke of another person I did not refer to anything that I expected to happen immediately. I am unable, as much as I ever was, to act as you desire.”

“I must believe you, Thyrsa ; but—but—the poor soul will die—oh—oh !”

It was a most painful scene, and not soon ended. Thyrsa wondered whether Lord Hardyknute knew of his cousin’s devotion to him. He could hardly be insensible to it if he did. His depression and Emma’s debility were the dark features in what would otherwise have been a joyous season ; for it was known that the war must soon terminate in the complete suppres-

sion of the mutiny, and du Lys's last letter had spoken of his obtaining leave of absence the moment he could be spared. The hope was now justified of his being about to return safe and sound. Thyrza's mind was much relieved on his account, and she was able to find satisfaction in the wealth which she had acquired, and to form plans for the future occupation of Hortlewood.

The business connected with her estate helped to pass the winter for Thyrza. Towards the spring it was remarked that Hardyknute was certainly rousing himself to more interest in the hunting, and beginning to look less woe-begone. At that time Thyrza and her mother went together to their new possession, not yet to reside (for they still retained Beech Lodge as their home), but to see to several matters which required immediate attention. They did not return from thence until after the receipt by Thyrza of a letter from du Lys, the principal information contained in which was that the writer would probably embark for England a few days after its date.

From that time everything seemed to have been smoothed for Thyrza—the ways prepared and the paths made straight. Only a week after the receipt of the letter du Lys himself was again in Beech Lodge, and Thyrza Knowles was once more in his arms.

“ Thus let me hold thee to my heart
And every care resign ;
And may we never, never part,
My life, my all that's mine.”

There was no making of terms now. Du Lys had brought back his shield. He had been made a colonel, a Queen's aide-de-camp, and a C.B. He no longer required any assistance to obtain a hearing at the Horse Guards. Everybody there was glad to listen to him. Thyrza's requirements were more than satisfied. She was content now to let her lover take the lead, and to prepare herself for the submission and obedience of a wife. It was an immense satisfaction to her to have it in her power to endow her husband with some worldly wealth. He had chosen her when she was poor, and now he was to receive her as the mistress of a handsome fortune.

Although the reins were surrendered into du Lys's hands, even his impatience could not insist upon an immediate marriage, for, alas ! those who should have rejoiced with him were plunged in deep affliction. His nephew, who had been taken every winter to the south of Europe, without ever experiencing more than a temporary recovery, had been too ill to return to England at the beginning of summer, and had died in June at Avignon. It was indeed a sad event, bereaving not only the living parents, but the ancient line. For there was no heir-apparent now to the name and honours

of Lys. It was believed that there would not be a direct heir ; and we know now that that belief was correct.

Du Lys of course appeared at Beech Lodge in deep mourning ; and the household, which was most deeply interested in the matter which brought him there, demanded and obtained an explanation of his gloomy garb. The young du Lys was dead, and it was now possible that the renowned line would be extinct. "Lor, Miss," was Maggy's rejoinder to this information, "don't you fret ; there'll be plenty of 'em or *I'm* mistaken,"—for which observation in the character of a ministering angel the young woman was sharply ordered out of the presence and informed that she forgot herself.

The murder (as people say) was out now, or so far out that it was understood on whose behalf Thyrza had kept single. There still remained a little difficulty about her having postponed her marriage for so long, and having been so anxious to get her lover sent abroad. Somehow or other the discovery that there was a real and older claimant for Thyrza's hand seemed to reconcile Lord Hardyknute in a degree to his rejection. "Of course," he said, "if it was an old affair it would have been impossible to disturb it ; but why the deuce did they keep it so quiet?" He came to congratulate Thyrza as soon as he knew of the engagement ; and was so much

at his ease in her company that he was not afraid to repeat the visit, and even to venture on something of his former intimacy.

"I know no man," said he one day, "whom I would so readily see you make happy as du Lys. I see only one objection."

"And that is?" asked Thyrsa, smiling.

"That you are both Normans by descent. I think it best that the races should intermarry as much as possible. You ought to have married a Saxon, Miss Knowles." A deep sigh here.

"Well, I don't know that I ought. It seems a very arbitrary rule. Probably we shall see you yourself breaking it some day."

"Ah! I think not; I think not."

"You would not perhaps condescend to make a Saxon lady happy."

"Be merciful, sweet lady. Your jest wounds."

"I am only partly in jest—only in manner. I tell you seriously my opinion that if you would look among the Saxons you might discover a means of making two people happy. There is an enigma which I request you to ponder."

"And I am to find the answer? I am dreadfully stupid at——"

"No; you are to put the question. I know what the answer will be."

Will it be believed that this simple fellow was for some time puzzled by Thyrza's riddle? He thought he understood the drift of it; and he told over his acquaintance again and again but got no light.

In despair he said, one day when he was at Ayresfield, "What can Miss Knowles mean, Emma? I have been puzzling three days over an enigmatical sentence of hers. She doesn't deal generally in dark sayings. She says that if I would look among the Saxon ladies I might find means of making two people happy."

The blood mounted up to Miss Seward's face. "Some nonsense," said she, as she rose hastily, and became vastly busy in another part of the room. But Hardyknute saw her colour, and he saw her tremble, before she escaped.

Impossible!!

It was remarkable how this Childe Harold, this cynic, this seared heart, this impassive being, warmed to the thought that there was anybody in the world by whom *his* affection was considered worth having. He took to his chamber a train of new and most refreshing ideas. It was odd how many little incidents, hitherto considered trivial, he found, now that he had got a clue, to have been full of meaning. As their teachings came home to him one after another he ejaculated, "By Jove! yes." "Of course; how

cursedly silly!" "Makes one laugh, ha, ha! hanged if it doesn't!"

Reflections like these gradually wrought a change in Lord Hardyknute, but no ordinary observer could say when it began. There was one observer, however—not an ordinary one—who felt the diversion which was beginning in his mind; one who long had watched his looks, his words, his actions, and whose heart, though divided from his, moved in sympathy with it, as the steel will conform to the motions of the magnet though separated therefrom by some dull medium. The Indian in the desert distinguishes sounds that are beyond the reach of ordinary human ears, and guides his steps thereby, those of duller sense unknowing of the teaching by which he is led. And Emma Seward, catching the first sight of Hardyknute's awakening, while yet he appeared to the rest of the world to slumber, received a ray of comfort to her heart, and the marks of care began to leave her. By one who knew where to seek it, the measure of Hardyknute's recovery might be seen in Emma Seward rather than in him.

One effect of the postponement of du Lys's marriage was that it gave time for Sir Hector Mackechnie (for such was now his style) to arrive in England before the ceremony. Another was that Colonel Warner did not survive to witness the completion of du Lys's hap-

piness; for it unfortunately happened that that distinguished veteran closed his useful career shortly before the wedding. His end was rather sudden, and his friends differed much as to cause of the calamity. Some vehemently affirmed that a "devil," seven times hotter than such dishes are wont to be heated, had destroyed him by actual cautery, just as if he had, like Portia, swallowed fire; while another sect pertinaciously held that no degree of devilling could have been beyond the endurance of his seasoned organs, and that it was a slur upon his memory to say that he had succumbed to meat or drink, while it was certain that his demise was attributable to the unskilful treatment of his regenerator. He had been fitted with a new liver (men of this persuasion maintained) only a month before; it was notorious that his system required at least a quarter of a year to work in full harmony with a strange organ; and yet before the liver was half naturalised, a fresh spleen had been introduced. Nature could not possibly bear the bungling of two recruits at once—he had indeed an awkward squad inside him—and came to a stand-still. The evidence for the respective sides is so evenly balanced that there is no warrant for preferring either of these explanations to the other, and each reader must be left to form his own opinion. Be it mentioned, by the way, that Colonel Warner had

succeeded, some time before his demise, in obtaining a fort-adjutant, and that after that appointment was made he generally resided in London. Peace to his ashes! whether that word be used in a literal or a figurative sense.

Clearly, a young lady with such possessions as Miss Knowles owned could not be married without proper settlements; and to these the assistance of a legal gentleman was necessary. Mr Darke, who had stood her friend before, and to whose exertions she might, in a sense, consider that her happiness was all owing, acted for her on the important occasion. But the old gentleman, unfortunately, was ailing much at this time, and he could not, except on favourable days, achieve even the journey to Beech Lodge. For this reason it was that, one morning when Miss Knowles's instructions as to a certain point had to be taken without delay, she was waited on by Mr John Darke, whom she had not once seen since he made his escape from Miss Seward and Lord Hardyknute. It might have been old Mr Darke himself, so respectful and business-like was he: and as for their former acquaintance, Mr John ignored it utterly, as if he had been quaffing bumpers of Lethe periodically from that day to this. He frequently had occasion to mention his father, of whom he no longer spoke as "the governor." His garments were of a homely cut, and inclining to shabbiness.

His thumb was inveterately blackened with ink. There was not the slightest odour of tobacco about him. And he appeared to forget that there were such things as "gals" in the world: perhaps he had exhausted the subject, and was leaving it for something fresher.

Thyrza inquired how Mrs John Darke was, and was informed in reply that Mrs John was, and always would be, delicate; but that she had mercifully been preserved through two most trying illnesses, and was certainly not in worse case than at the time of her marriage. On the point whether Mr John kept her in good condition by following the recipe which was formerly in favour with him—namely, perpetually irritating her, Thyrza could not inquire, and got no information. But it appeared certain that Jessie's taking him in hand when she did had been the salvation of Mr John. When he first appeared in this history he was at the very worst period of his life, just as he had emerged from the companionship of a circle of young bezonians among whom he had fallen in London. He had not been in his school days considered a vicious or a heartless lad, and his rearing had been orderly and decent. But he was weak, imitative, and not proof against the fascinations of that worldly wisdom, as he thought it, which shone so in his silly companions: and he had become during his stay in London the consummately offensive person that has been described in

these pages. Fortunately for him, he made acquaintance with the realities of life before he had made an irretrievable step in the wrong direction; and was, as he would himself have said at that time, "pulled up sharp."

Mr John, as we have since ascertained, although he submits to his fate, and is a passably good husband and father, and is regarded generally as a very respectable man, nevertheless confides to his intimate friends that he made, in early life, a mistake from which he has been suffering ever since, and is content to suffer. He sacrificed his prospects for a fancy—impetuous nature,—unreflecting passion,—and so on. He evidently does not perceive that, from the condition at which he had arrived, there was no retreat except by a sacrifice; and that if he had not, as he said, "sacrificed himself," he stood a capital chance of being sacrificed by knaves, or by vices, or possibly by the hangman. Without question, thousands of those who make only a poor business of life pass through a stage similar to that in which Mr John was when he left London. Should no kindly-cruel cross arrest them in career they travel forward to ruin; but some shock, acting like a sound shaking, may winnow the folly out of them, and throw them back upon the truer teachings of early life. Such imbeciles have little to do with shaping their own destiny, and go up or down as what we are fond of calling *chance* may decide. Truly was it written—

“Men are the sport of circumstances when
The circumstances seem the sport of men.”

But enough of Mr John Darke.

Before the autumn it was known in the world that Lord Hardyknute had at last been comforted after his rejection by the beauty, Miss Knowles. And the re-illumined eyes and the bright smile of his fair cousin indicated that she had been the comforter. “It is all wrong,” Hardyknute was now addicted to saying, “it is all wrong, Emma; each of us ought to have married a Norman.”

“We will get you a dispensation for this occasion,” Emma would answer, “and you shall marry a Norman next. My conscience is less tender.” Whereupon Hardyknute would draw her towards him, and tell her, with interruptions, that he was bound to tolerate a little free-thinking on her part, that he had never deserved to be so happy as he was now, and other expressions equally important to the general public.

It must be owned, too, that there were one or two of Emma’s friends who delicately hinted that Hardyknute was going to marry to cover his chagrin, and as a defiance to Miss Knowles. This might be well for him; but it was a serious matter for a lady who should accept a preoccupied heart under such circumstances. In reply to which remarks Emma said—

“Bless his honest face. If he says he loves me, the

world cannot furnish evidence enough to make me doubt him."

Miss Seward was married very nearly at the same time as her friend Miss Knowles. The latter young lady, not being rich in near male relatives, had to be given away by some one of her distant kinsmen. It was the Earl of High Vert who officiated, not a contemptible pro-parent to have been found, as folks say, "promiscuously." Du Lys's best man was not "promiscuous," but a specially invoked supporter, Major-General Sir Hector Mackechnie, K.C.B. Thyrsa's bridesmaids were all young ladies of noble or gentle blood, whose names it is unnecessary to record here, as they have not been previously mentioned in this narrative. Du Lys's brother and sister were still too deeply afflicted to be present at the ceremony.

"My dear," said Mackechnie to Thyrsa one day, "I loved ye before I aiver saw ye, because ye'd made my best friend happy."

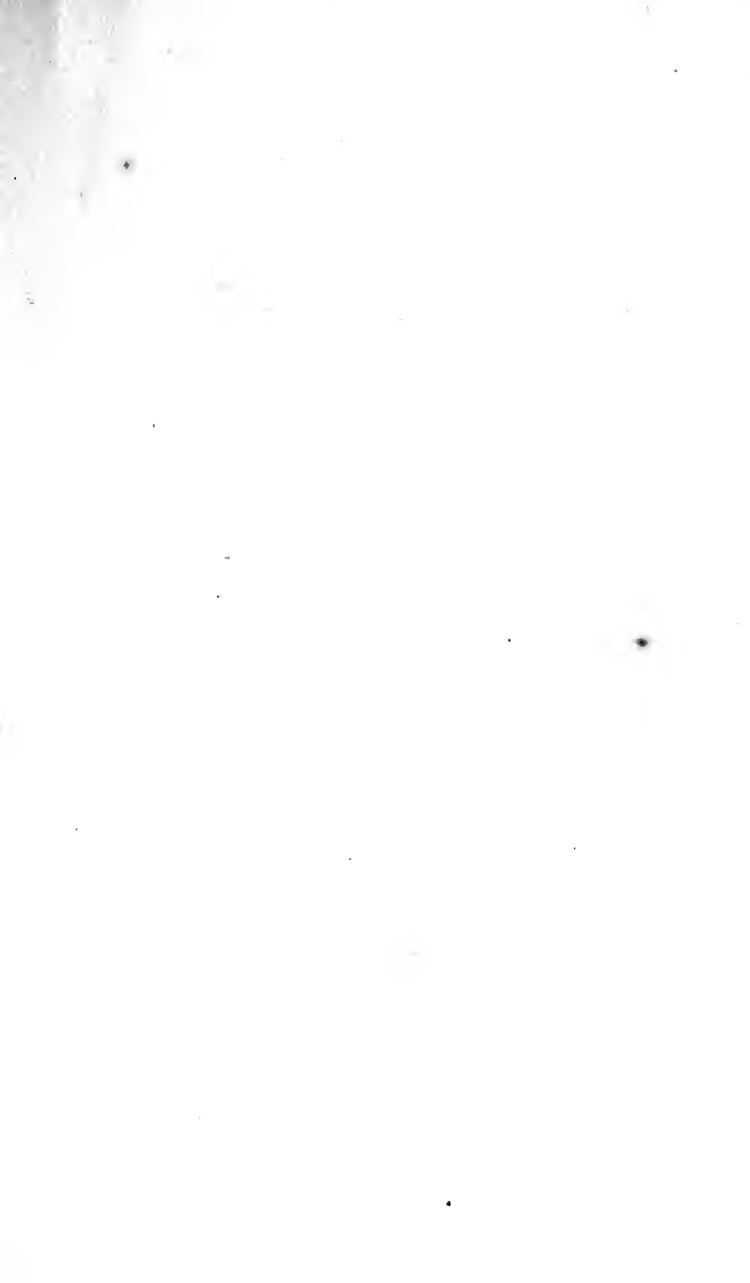
"And I loved you before I ever saw you," answered Thyrsa, "because you made my best friend a soldier."

There is only one stage further to which the writer's personal knowledge of this family can guide him, and that is that in due time there was an heir-presumptive to the baronetcy of du Lys—a crown and a rejoicing to Mrs Knowles, who was so wholly given up to the infant that it might be said that she became its nurse, as

Naomi became the nurse of little Obed. The babe's names, however, were nothing resembling Obed. Neither were they all strictly Norman names; for among them was Hector, by which no du Lys had ever before been called.

Thus far our own testimony. We have since heard, as all the world has, of Beauclerc du Lys being made a Knight Commander of the Star of India; and, as all the world has perhaps not heard, that Lady du Lys has been as earnest in the performance of her duties towards that ancient and honourable house as she had heretofore been in all other duties; and that whereas the said house had at one time been reduced to the number of two representatives, it seems now to have acquired a blessing similar to that of the house of Jonadab the son of Rechab, whereby there is ground for hoping that it will not want a man to stand for England's rights for ever.

THE END.





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